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Your Excellency Mr. Nematullo Hikmatullozoda, Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan,

Mr. Saidrahmon Nazriev, First Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan,

Mr. C.C. Yu, Country Director of the Asian Development Bank,

Representatives of the Private Sector,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the WTO, welcome to this Opening Session: Session 1 on the: *"Post-Accession Benefits of the WTO Membership of Tajikistan"*.

Before we start, a few points in my role as Moderator for this session.

The WTO congratulates the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan

The WTO commends the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the timely and necessary steps it has taken to co-organize and co-host this conference with the Government of Tajikistan. The WTO looks forward to continuing to work closely together in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (and traditional and emerging development partners), and with the Republic of Tajikistan to deepen the WTO membership gains for Tajikistan.

The WTO Protocol on the Accession of Tajikistan is of a high quality; rules- and reform-based. It is one of the better Accession Protocols out of the 33 Accession Protocols that have been concluded by the WTO in the past twenty years.

The commitment to far-reaching domestic reforms, WTO core values and rules and market opening commitments and concessions should not be taken for granted. These were courageous and reform-based decisions taken at a challenging time for the economy of Tajikistan, as it sought to transform its economy from central planning to a market economy, reconcile regionalism

Accession Protocol of Tajikistan, at the WTO General Council in December 2012.

Session I; this Session has to address three questions:

First, where do the benefits of WTO membership lie?;

Second, although the Accession Protocol is a "Package", which are those core commitments in the Accession Protocol of Tajikistan that provide incentives for business, improve the business environment and generate welfare gains for consumers?; and,

Third, how is implementation proceeding with the commitments in the Accession Protocol of Tajikistan?

_____ : where do the benefits from WTO membership lie? The benefits from WTO membership Post-Accession are considerable. WTO Members have non-discriminatory MFN-based access to the markets of all 161 WTO Members. This market access is predictable and legally secure. A member has the right, pursuant to the rules, to comment on draft trade regulations and bills of other WTO Members before they become law and/or regulate trade so as to ensure transparency, stability and predictability in international trade relations. Any Member has the right to invoke the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU), one of the most powerful systems of dispute settlement in Public International Law, to challenge the trade measures of any other member, whose trade measures may nullify and/or impair its benefits. No less, a new member obtains a seat at the table, by right, to negotiate new work programmes, new trade rules and, benefit from technical assistance and capacity-building. The relative importance of the benefits that a member enjoys as a right can weigh more or less, depending on the economic circumstance of the new Member. For instance, landlocked economies such as Tajikistan accord premium value to the invocation of the freedom of transit.

Over a 12-year period, from 2001 to 2013, WTO Members and the Secretariat supported Tajikistan to complete its accession negotiations linked to its domestic reforms. In December 2012, the General Council approved Tajikistan's "Terms of Accession". On 2 March 2013, Tajikistan became the 159th member of the World Trade Organization. Its membership was a clear signal to all trading partners that it was ready to engage in the rules-based global economy within the legal and policy framework of the WTO.

When negotiations end, and membership starts, the real work begins. This Trade and Investment Conference is a continuation of the process of trade integration, to support the efforts of Tajikistan to deepen its on-going domestic reforms and continued integration into the global economy and to ensure that the gains from membership materialize.

_____, which are those core commitments in the Accession Protocol of Tajikistan that provide incentives for business, improve the business environment and should generate welfare gains for consumers?

As an economy in dynamic transformation from central planning to a market economy, WTO provisions will apply uniformly throughout the entire territory of the country, including in regions engaging in border trade and special economic zones.

Upon accession, Tajikistan commenced the application of all WTO provisions without recourse to transitional periods.

It is on course to accede to the Informational Technology Agreement (ITA), indispensable for trade integration in an interdependent global economy, transparency, efficiency in economic activities, delivery of educational services and financial inclusion.

Domestic taxes would be applied in a non-discriminatory manner to imports, regardless of country of origin and to domestically produced goods.

Trade remedies would be applied in accordance with WTO rules.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Tajikistan has demonstrated its vision and leadership to champion trade and the WTO - not only by concluding its accession negotiations with exemplary determination - but also through its proactivity and commitment in implementing multilateral trade rules. Only four weeks ago, Tajikistan ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, making it one of the first members to ratify it. I encourage Tajikistan to help other WTO members, particularly those in Central Asia, ratify the Agreement. Our aim is that the Agreement comes into effect by the next WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi this December.

Tajikistan should continue advancing its development agenda, keep its market open and sustaining conditions, which fuel trade, bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally. All three formats can be mutually supportive. They are not mutually exclusive.

Conditions in domestic economies are never ideal. There will always be scope for improvements. This conference provides welcome opportunities to ask questions and enquire about aspects of policies, regulations and laws and their implementation. There is an opportunity to deepen the dialogue and strengthen the partnership with a country that is fundamentally committed in good faith to domestic reforms, improving its play on the rule of law, good governance and global economic integration. It is right that multilateral institutions and development partners are here to provide support. Although Tajikistan has undertaken vital commitments and registered crucial progress, there is still considerable work to be done. Above all, the investor community now has to respond to the price and market signals from the WTO commitments of Tajikistan.