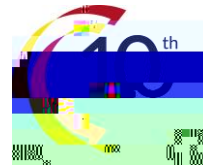


Potential remarks

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

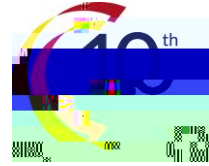
Welcome! We are here today to mark the 10th anniversary of the China's Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and Accessions Programme (the . This comes soon after we celebrated the 20th anniversary of China's WTO membership last month.

Let me start by thanking the Government of China for this programme, the only one of its kind dedicated to Accessions. Accessions and LDCs are two critical tests of the multilateral trading system's ability to bring



least developed countries, many from acceding countries and Article XII Members, have worked directly in the Accessions Division of the WTO Secretariat. I am told many of them went back home and joined their government's WTO team, often working to advance their own countries' accession processes. This attests to how the programme directly strengthens countries' accession capacity, but also has longer-term impacts by fostering skills and connections among young trade professionals who understand the multilateral trade system.

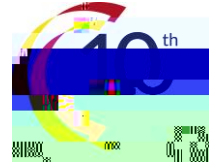
The China Programme also supports LDCs to participate more effectively in the multilateral trading system. 31 activities have been supported to increase LDC participation in WTO meetings, about half on work relating to cotton. South-South dialogues help LDCs coordinate positions and reach out to partners to advance topics of mutual interest. I had the pleasure to attend such a dialogue last September, where I shared views on how the WTO and MC12 could help LDCs use trade to address vaccine inequity, drive their economic recoveries from the pandemic, and foster deeper integration into regional and global value chains. The final pillar of these activities are workshops the Secretariat has organized for several LDCs to disseminate key findings from Trade Policy Reviews, discuss possible trade reforms, and identify trade-related capacity building needs.



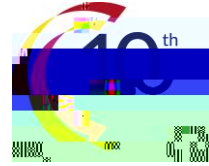
and Timor-Leste. Despite the disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, some of these processes are making good progress. In fact, over the last 24 months, all but one of the active Working Parties on accessions have been for LDCs.¹ One of the most advanced accessions today is an LDC i.e., the Comoros.

In this context, let me welcome the study prepared for this Roundtable, which will be discussed in tomorrow's session. The study provides a practical set of recommendations on "pre-accession, negotiations and post-accession" for acceding LDCs, based on the lessons learned from the nine LDC accessions. These deal with steps such as the development of an accession strategy, the appointment of a Chief Negotiator, the establishment of a negotiating team, capacity building, the role of the Geneva mission, the preparation of market access offers, consultations process with domestic stakeholders, public outreach, and so on.

I want to thank former WTO Chief Economist Patrick Low and former accession Chief Negotiator for Afghanistan Mozammil Shinwari for this study,



moderating the session tomorrow to add his insights and advice. I believe that the session will be useful for



a post-COVID recovery path starting this year, output among fragile, conflict-affected states will be 7.5 to 8.5 per cent below its pre-pandemic level.² This is alarming.

In closing, I want to commend the g7+ WTO Accessions Group of fragile and conflict affected LDCs for bringing "peace" the fundamental reason for the creation of the multilateral trading system