



REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON WTO ACCESSIONS FOR THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA

28 - 30 AUGUST 2017

NAIROBI, KENYA

OPENING REMARKS

BY MS .

Her Excellency Ambassador Amina Mohamed , Cabinet
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya,
Professor Peter Mbithi, Vice-Chancellor of the University of
Nairobi ,

Hon our able Ministers from the Acceding Governments and the
WTO Member s

Distinguished Guests ,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. On behalf of WTO Director -General Roberto
Azevêdo , I would like to extend my warm welcome to all
participants of the Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions
for the Greater Horn of Africa . It is indeed my great
pleasure to see many of friends and colleagues coming from
Geneva and the capitals of the Acceding Governments . Special
thanks to those who had to adjust their summer holiday plan s
to join us here in Nairobi.

I would also like to express my gratitude t o the
Government of Kenya for initiating and hosting this event , in
partnership with the University of Nairobi. I cannot think of
any better place to hold this event than in Nairobi, where WTO
Members, at the ir 10th Ministerial Conference twenty months
ago, laid the foundation for a stronger Multilateral Trading
System with the conclusion of the accessions of Liberia and
Afghanistan.

Indeed, it was in this same venue, Mara Ball Room, where the African Ministers pre-celebrated these two LDC accessions at the Fourth China Round Table event, just before the Nairobi Ministerial Conference. At the same event, with the participation of President Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya, African Ministers debated on their Perspectives of the Future of the Multilateral Trading System, in particular, how they could contribute to shaping the future direction and the agenda of the WTO.

Turning to the Dialogue which we are starting today, this is the first time we are discussing WTO accessions with a specific focus on Africa. This is indeed the first initiative by an African country for African accessions. Kenya Cabinet Secretary Mohamed and Ambassador Karau in Geneva, in particular, deserve all the credit for the idea and leadership for this event. Let me explain why.

At present, Africa, with 44 Members, represents over a quarter of the WTO membership. Since the establishment of the Organization in 1995, the WTO family has been expanded by 36 additional Members, to a total of 164 Members today. However, Africa constitutes less than 10% of this family expansion, as so far, only three African countries Cabo Verde (2008), Seychelles (2015) and Liberia (2016) i.e. two islands and one LDC have concluded their WTO accessions successfully.

Given this, today, 8 out of the 21 countries seeking WTO membership are African. Some of them are quite large and significant, whether in terms of territory, population or the size of economy. The Greater Horn of Africa constitutes one of the largest concentrations of countries outside the WTO today. This is why I applaud the initiative by Kenya, as a responsible WTO

applications forward. This "Liberian" effect has had an impact not only in this region and Africa as a whole, but also across the world of remaining accessions, from the Caribbean, Middle East, Central, South and South East Asia, to the Pacific islands.

Together with the accession of Afghanistan, which is another post-conflict LDC, the conclusion of Liberia's accession

The accession of Sudan is one of the longest running

met with the former Trade Minister of Somalia . This Regional Dialogue offers a first opportunity to interact with the Somali team, led by new Trade Minister Dualeh, to start and discuss the preparation for its accession process , as a Chief Negotiator has recently been appointed .

My team and I will spend two additional days with the Somali team after the Dialogue to start the preparation of a Memorandum on Somalia's Foreign Trade Regime, which will be the base document to kick off the accession negotiations.

Finally, South Sudan has recently expressed its intention to submit an application for WTO Accession , so that they can also start the accession process. We are very pleased to have Minister Ayet and his team with us in Nairobi , thanks to the funding provided by the Enhanced Integrated Framework . We hope that this Dialogue provides a first opportunity for South Sudan to hear directly from its neighbours which have gone through the various stages of the WTO accession process , which could help them decide on their way forward.

Today, we are privileged to have among us, Ministers and high-level representatives of these Acceding Governments. Their presence here is a testimony to the importance they attach to WTO accession and the associated values to the process . I hope that over the next three days , this Dialogue

will inject further impetus to their respective accession processes.

Ladies and gentlemen

WTO accession is a process of domestic reforms, accompanied by adjustments in the legal and policy frameworks governing the trade and economic policy-making of an Acceding Government. While this process can be long, demanding and often daunting, most, if not all, Governments that have gone through this process before, including several of them in this room, can testify that at the end, WTO accession has done some good for them, as it was a part of their domestic reform agenda to modernise and transform their economies.

According to the last year's Director General's Annual Report on WTO Accessions, the trade performance of the Article XII Members consistently has surpassed that of the original WTO Members, registering an average annual growth rate of 10.6 per cent, over 6.2 per cent by the original Members, since the establishment of the WTO. Even if we exclude the largest Article XII Member by trade volume, which is China, the trade growth of the other Article XII Members was still 20 per cent faster than the global growth rate.

This is why we are lucky to have among us partners which are supportive of these objectives. These include the representatives from the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF). These partners will not only share their perspectives on the linkage between regional integration and the WTO, but they would also present their menu of possible support and assistance to respond to the specific needs of the Acceding Governments.

In conclusion, let me thank our host once again for providing this unique and timely opportunity for substantive, forward-looking discussion which would contribute to Members' preparation for the upcoming Ministerial Conference. An outcome document which summarizes its main points emerging from the three days of deliberation will be forwarded to the WTO membership, as well as to the Ministerial Conference, immediately after this Dialogue, by the host country, on behalf of the participants.

I look forward to interactive discussions with all participants over the next three days.

Thank you.

