



SECOND GLOBAL SEMINAR ON WTO ACCESSIONS  
 SAUDI ARABIA 10-YEAR WTO ACCESSION SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY SESSION  
 ACCESSIONS BOOK LAUNCH BY WTO DIRECTOR-GENERAL ROBERTO AZEVEDO

*Statement for Minister Khemmani, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR*

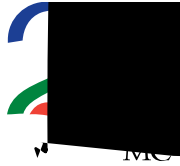
*Panel 2 - Negotiating Experience: Chaloemphak (Lao PDR) 01225gm9 IEMC P KICID 3DC 10125m IEMC P KICID 3DC*

*The accession process as a long and comprehensive exercise for Lao PDR. It has ultimately permitted us to engage in the economic reforms that have brought us many benefits to this day. Before getting into the nitty gritty of my short presentation, I would first like to present to you a few facts regarding our accession process in order to give you a general feeling of what it has meant and still means for us.*

3. Lao PDR's accession process spanned over 15 years, starting in 1997 and ending on 2 February 2013. Commitments taken had to be implemented upon

accession while some others benefitted from transition periods.

5. Just like other WTO members, the commitments Lao PDR has negotiated and agreed on with WTO Members were made on two fronts: the rule-making and market access. Regarding the former, Lao PDR enacted 90 laws and regulations, both new and revised, to ensure that its legal trade-related regime is in line with WTO obligations. This legislation covers a wide range of areas, including import and export licensing, customs valuation, services, investment, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and intellectual property rights.



Concerning our market access commitments, the commitments on trade in goods cover 10,694 tariff lines, with an average bound rate of 19.3% for agricultural goods and 18.7% for industrial goods, compared with applied tariffs of 18.4% and 10.0%, respectively. Most tariff commitments took effect from the date of accession while some are to be reduced transitionally over 5 to 10 years. Given our LDC status and by providing sound and rational arguments during various rounds of bilateral negotiations, Lao PDR has been able to convince our negotiating partners that joining the sectoral initiatives, in particular to cut tariffs to 0%, would have been too much for our economy at this point in time, given the important other reforms we were implementing.

7. On services negotiations, Lao PDR has opened 10 service sectors or 79 subsectors (out of a total 160 subsectors). These include: professional services, computer services, research and development, telecommunication, construction, distribution services, private education, environmental services, financial services, private health, tourism, and air transport.

8. Overall, this can give you an idea of what the accession process entailed for us. Of course,



10. Now, with respect to the challenges we have faced and the lessons we learn, the first thing that comes to mind is the fact that joining WTO is not an end in itself; it is a tool to help a country adjust its internal system to the best practices of the world trading community. Continuation of the reform process after accession and proper implementation of reforms is instrumental, otherwise the risks of not fully benefitting from WTO membership would be bigger, and efforts instilled into such laborious process would go unrewarded.

11. The WTO accession process provides a very useful

