

Remarks by  
HE Mohammad Khan Rahmani,  
First Deputy Chief Executive,  
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan  
at the  
WTO Tenth Ministerial Conference  
Nairobi, Kenya  
December 17, 2015

Your Excellency, Amina Mohamed, Chair of the WTO Tenth  
Ministerial Conference,

Your Excellency, Director General, Roberto Azevêdo

Your Excellency Chair of the General Council, Ambassador Fernando  
De Mateo

Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, and Heads of Delegations

Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, I extend my profound gratitude to President Uhuru Kenyatta for hosting this conference here in Nairobi, and for the very warm welcome and hospitality exhibited by the Kenyan people.

As the First Deputy to Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah of the National Unity government, it is a great honor for me to sign on behalf of our President, His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the Protocol of Accession of Afghanistan to the WTO pursuant to Article Twelve of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization.

Today is indeed a historic day for the people of Afghanistan who have embraced democratic values and market economy principles. Our membership in the WTO will cement our long-standing commitment to open economy, transparency, rule of law, good governance, non-discrimination, and market instruments for the development of our

economy and private sector, and for the alleviation of poverty in Afghanistan.

WTO membership has always been an integral part of our overall strategic objectives to achieve economic stability, improve regional security and cooperation, and achieve everlasting peace.

We intend to maximize the benefits of WTO membership to support key aspects of our self-reliance strategy presented by our President and Chief Executive during the London Conference in December 2014.

Our President views the WTO process as an engine for achieving sound structural reforms and strengthening market instruments.

Our accession process lasted about eleven years. It was a learning experience for our country where significant capacity was built within our governmental institutions, private sector, academic institutions, and civil society organizations.

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The reforms accomplished through this process have been enormous.

Allow me to start by thanking those who helped and accompanied us on this long journey. We are deep

We are very thankful for the WTO Division of Accessions led by Mr. Chiedu Osakwe for its cooperative ro

Our commitment to liberal trade and international cooperation is not new. Afghanistan was at the heart of the old Silk Road. Historically,

judicial. Strengthening our democracy is one of the principle reasons we sought WTO membership.

We have made women participation in government and business a priority. Many programs are presently underway to develop the capacity of Afghan women on a sustainable basis.                      percent of the members of our parliament are women and more than a dozen women presently hold high-ranking positions within our government,

s. The number of women-owned businesses has been constantly increasing. We have today                      registered women-owned businesses, in addition to individual entrepreneurs.

Afghanistan provides equal opportunity to all without any discrimination. Afghanistan's labor la

have been improved, although it is true that we still have huge power shortages. Although major road construction projects have been completed linking major cities and key border points, we still have major infrastructure projects awaiting finance and execution, including irrigation systems and rail development.

We have undertaken many steps to curtail corruption and create greater fiscal efficiency in our public procurement system. We trust that the implementation of the WTO rules-based system will contribute to our campaign against corruption.

We have utilized our WTO accession process as an engine to shape our policies, laws, and institutions; to increase transparency; to strengthen the rule of law and legal protection of investors' rights, including property rights; and to guaranty access to administrative appeals as well as judicial and arbitral bodies. Today, we have a very favorable trade and investment regime with effective commercial laws and sound trade policies and laws based on WTO agreements.

We have also joined, and renewed our membership, in numerous international organizations relevant to international trade, We also ratified the Montreal Protocol for protection of the environment.

Developing regional trade has been a high priority for us during the last decade, particularly given our proximity to the most populated region in the world with over three billion consumers.

We are an active member of the South Asian Association for Economic Cooperation and we are signatories to the South Asia Free Trade Agreement with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. We are also a member of the Economic Cooperation Organization with Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and the central Asian republics. In addition, we are a member of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation framework.

We have maintained an open transit policy and facilitated connectivity within our region including major North-South energy transit projects.

We have recently launched the implementation of the Central Asia

South Asia (CASA one thousand) project which will supply South Asia with thousand megawatts of electric power from energy rich Central Asia. Four days ago, we inaugurated the launching of



construction materials, medical herbs, marble, and gemstones. There also opportunities in the service sphere including financial services, transport, construction, health, education, and logistics services. Our priority is to develop infant industries and grow a large-scale manufacturing and assembly base, which will create a large number of employment opportunities for the growing number of unemployed young persons.

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In closing, I would like to stress that today Afghanistan is assuming its

Trade-led growth will create new economic opportunities and jobs, especially for women; it will reduce poverty, and increase prosperity. This will dissuade younger generations from being lured by terrorist organizations. It will certainly contribute in a major way to dramatically reduce extremism and achieve regional peace and security. We place high hopes in our WTO membership to help us in this regard.

WTO membership will strengthen and improve our relations with neighboring WTO countries. We encourage other neighboring countries to accelerate their WTO accession process in order to create a level playing field and maximize harmonization to the mutual benefit of all economies, economic actors, and consumers in the region. We have come a long way to integrate Afghanistan into the multilateral trading system. Our negotiations team, led by Deputy Minister Mozammil Shinwari, has done a phenomenal job in achieving our accession. Our nation is thankful for their hard work, dedication, and

