

**STATEMENT OF
H.E. MOZAMMIL SHINWARI
DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN AT THE
NINTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
World Trade Organization
Bali, Indonesia
December 3-6, 2013**

Excellences,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference here in Bali, Indonesia. On behalf of the Government and the People of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, allow me first to express my gratitude for this opportunity as well as my deep appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for hosting this meeting and the wonderful hospitality of the People of Indonesia.

Afghanistan recognizes the importance and the benefits of WTO membership in creating a level-playing field for international trade and in providing a sound framework for protecting the trading rights of its Members. As a landlocked least developed country, we view WTO membership as a catalyst for greater cooperation among nations and regional stability. The effectiveness and viability of the WTO system has been demonstrated not only in promoting fair and predictable trade rules but also during the global economic crisis.

My country views WTO membership as an important factor for attracting investors to rebuild our economy and meet our development needs as a Least Developed Country. Three decades of conflict have resulted in extensive damage to our country's physical,

institutional, human and social infrastructure. In addition, our economic capacity has been significantly damaged. The development of our agricultural related infrastructure and the proper management of our natural resources are critical for long-term sustainable development and stability. In addition, our country has not yet fully exploited its economic potential or achieved the development of competitive value-added industry. Special considerations by WTO Members for our development needs are important to allow us to develop our infant industry and to create new jobs and economic opportunities.

We began our journey toward achieving WTO membership in 2004. The process has been a major challenge for us as a Least Developed Country. Thanks however to technical assistance from many WTO Members we have made significant headways in our accession process during the last three years. We have had four successful working party meetings and have concluded our plurilateral agricultural negotiations. Our bilateral negotiations on market access on goods and services are nearing conclusion with interested trading partners. More importantly, we have launched policy, legal, and institutional reforms to fully conform to the WTO agreements and rules. There are presently over 20 pieces of legislation at advanced stages of the legislative process.

Our aim is to conclude our accession proceedings as early as possible in 2014. We are very appreciative of your support to enable our WTO accession in the very near future.

Afghanistan is moving forward with confidence toward WTO membership.

Notwithstanding WTO accession, a core element of our government strategy for economic growth and development has been to sustain an open economy based on liberal trade principles, disciplined fiscal and monetary policies, and sound, non-discriminatory investment environment.

Our government remains firmly committed to the establishment of a viable private sector. We have established the basic framework for a robust market economy that encourages investment and the development of a competitive commercial environment with access to regional markets.

We view WTO membership as an essential element of our effort to strengthen our trade and investment framework and establish the environment for greater economic opportunities that will alleviate poverty in our county.

Before I close, I would like to congratulate Yemen in completing its accession proceedings and accomplishing the final steps toward becoming the 160th Member of the WTO. The approval of Yemen's terms of membership yesterday at this historical Ministerial Conference is a great achievement by the talented negotiations team of Yemen led by His Excellency Sa'aduddin Bin Taleb

We look forward to becoming a WTO Member in the near future so we can participate actively in the work of the multilateral trading system and this important organization.

Thank you.