

## **ACCESSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

### **H.E. MR. JOAKIM REITER (SWEDEN), CHAIRPERSON OF THE WORKING PARTY REPORT TO THE TENTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

**16 DECEMBER 2015**

1. Thank you Madam Chairperson, HE Minister Mohamed.
2. As Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of the Republic of Liberia, it my pleasure to present the "Report of the Working Party".
3. I am particularly honoured to do so in the presence of H.E Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya, and H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, who provided the leadership and vision to make this accession possible.
4. Allow me also to echo the warm welcome to H.E Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Liberia's chief negotiator, as well as the whole distinguished Delegation of Liberia and Members of its Negotiating Team.

5. The Working Party on the Accession of the Republic of Liberia was established on 18 December 2007 to examine Liberia's request for WTO accession. From that day until now, the accession process of Liberia has taken 8 years minus 2 days.
6. The Working Party has held four (4) formal meetings, including the final Working Party meeting held on 6 October 2015. As you would have noticed, the intensity of the accession negotiations increased significantly in 2015. For the last one year and until the end, the Working Party never stopped working. There was non-stop engagement, requiring immense determination and endurance of Liberia, represented by its entire negotiating team. And Liberia succeeded: on 6 October, the Working Party – and all WTO Members - agreed on an *ad referendum* basis to the Accession Package.
7. Today, therefore, I am honoured to introduce the Accession Package of Liberia and to report on the conclusions and recommendations of this Package.

8. The results of the negotiations, constituting the "Terms of Accession", are contained in the following documents:
  - The Report of the Working Party, circulated in document WT/MIN(15)/2;
  - The Schedule of Concessions and Commitments on Goods, contained in document WT/MIN(15)/2/Add.1; and,
  - The Schedule of Specific Commitments on Services, contained in document WT/MIN(15)/2/Add.2.
9. By adopting on an *ad referendum* basis the Accession Package of Liberia, the Working Party completed its mandate. And it forwarded the Report that I present today to this Ministerial Conference for a formal decision.
10. The Appendix to the Report contains the draft Decision for the Ministerial Conference and the draft Protocol on the Accession of the Republic of Liberia to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. The Accession Protocol incorporates, by reference, the specific

commitments undertaken by Liberia in the Report of the Working Party.

11. It should be noted that thanks to the important actions taken over the course of the accession negotiations, Liberia is already far advanced in the adoption of WTO-consistent national legislation.
12. Over 110 projects of laws and regulations were notified to the WTO for multilateral review. The progress on the legislative front, including the clear sense of ownership of the process shown by Liberia's legislature, contributed greatly to the forward momentum in our work over the past one year.
13. As Chairman of the Working Party, following my assessment of the Accession Package of Liberia with the Secretariat Team, compared to 34 previous Accession Packages, I am in a position to report to the Ministerial Conference that the Accession Package of Liberia is high quality, especially for an LDC. The Package, in my view, will contribute to strengthening the rules-based Multilateral Trading System. And, just as vital, it provides Liberia with a long term agenda for

sustained legislation-based domestic reforms, in a manner that genuinely promotes trade and investment for economic welfare of the people of Liberia.

14. Before I conclude, I would like to pay tribute to Liberia's team of devoted and committed negotiators under the leadership of Chief Negotiator Minister Axel Addy. The work of the entire Liberian Negotiating Team was exemplary. The fact that they worked tirelessly, in the midst of a horrific health crisis of global ramifications, makes their achievement all the more significant.
15. Our Members deserve the highest tribute. They worked very hard to support the Delegation of Liberia. They demonstrated goodwill and pragmatism.
16. As the Chairperson of the Working Party, I would also like to place on record my deep appreciation to Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for his support to this LDC accession.
17. I would also like to pay particular tribute to the all of the Secretariat staff, supporting me and – more

importantly – assisting Liberia throughout this process. In particular, the Director of the Accessions Division, the Secretary and Co-Secretary of the Working Party worked consistently, providing guidance and expert support and helping us all to manage the ebbs and tides that every accession is naturally confronted with.

18. In closing, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Working Party, I have the privilege to commend the Protocol on the Accession of the Republic of Liberia for approval; and commend the Draft Decision and the Report of the Working Party for adoption by the Ministerial Conference.

19. Thank you.

---