

Excellency Ambassador Mr. Alan Wolff

Excellency Mr. Xanana Gusmão, Former President and Prime Minister of Timor Leste

Excellency Minister for Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone, Mr. Peter Bayuku Konteh,

Excellency Minister for Trade, Industry and East African Community Affairs of South Sudan, Mr. Moses Hassan Ayet Tiel

Esteemed Ms. Sara Sekkenes, Conflict Prevention and Partnerships Advisor, UNDP

Esteemed Mr. Will Martindale, Head of Policy and Research, at UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Warm Greeting from Afghanistan. I am honored to represent Afghanistan in today's discussions on Trade for Peace: Integration of Fragile States into the Global Economy as a Pathway towards Peace and Resilience.

The Afghan government and citizens have forged ahead on the path of achieving economic self-reliance. It cannot be denied that the sustainable development that will help Afghanistan meet its many challenges, bring an end to poverty, and ensure security and stability for our country will take longer than a single generation to realize. We are determined to move our country beyond its history of war and poverty and begin the long journey to prosperity. Afghanistan's accession to WTO has been one of the many positive steps that have been taken as we strive to increase trade and investment in our country.

We envision that opening up to international trade will have a direct positive impact on increasing our national income and promote our efforts to achieve an equitable balance of trade as it will allow us to use our resources more efficiently by specializing in the production of the goods and services that we can produce more cheaply, while importing the others. Integrating in the global trade framework will also have a positive effect on long term growth since it will give us access to more advanced technological inputs available in the global market and enhance incentives for innovation.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We believe trade contributes directly to poverty reduction by opening up new employment opportunities with the expansion of export sectors, and by bringing about structural changes in the economy that increase employment of low-skilled, poor workers in the informal sector. Trade also provides better access to external markets for the goods that the poor produce and therefore it plays a key role in poverty reduction.

Promotion of trade creates a circle of prosperity and opportunities. Strong economic growth which is a direct product of increased trade creates employment opportunities and improves incentives for parents to invest in their children's education by sending them to school. This will lead to the emergence of a strong and growing group of entrepreneurs, which should generate pressure for improved governance and human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth.

As a former women entrepreneur and businesswoman in Afghanistan I strongly believe that trade can contribute to women moving out of unpaid labor in agriculture into more lucrative sectors like manufacturing and services, and increase their income and generate more formal employment opportunities for them.

Esteemed Guests

Integration of Least Developed and conflict ridden nations into the international trading system is crucial for peace building and supporting national reconstruction in fragile states through trade. Trade can help these countries to devise pathways out of conflict. Pursuing strategies for economic integration in ways that address the challenges faced by the extreme poor in Post Conflict and Least Developed Countries can help maximize the gains from trade.

We need to sustain efforts to lower trade costs for the Least Developed and Post-Conflict member states of WTO. Reducing trade costs in these countries can increase the competitiveness of the goods and services exported by them and lower

the costs of key inputs in production. The inverse relationship between trade costs and income — the poorer countries are, the higher the trade costs they face — underlines the need to do more on this front.

As the most vulnerable members of WTO, the g7 + WTO Accession Group needs the support of the international community to enable them to successfully integrate in the global trade system. In addition to that I believe the esteemed member nations of the g7 + WTO Accession Group can also provide crucial knowledge and experience sharing support to each other as we move ahead on the path of fostering resilience and promoting sustainable economic development in our countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Afghanistan has in the past year made considerable achievements towards the fulfillment of our WTO commitments. The National Trade Policy and The National Export Strategy are two key policy frameworks that have been developed and formalized with the support and assistance of the International Trade Center. We have also forged ahead on the path of building strong regional trade relations with key South and Central Asian Countries by engaging in public private dialogues for promotion of bilateral trade.

Successful integration of Afghanistan in the global trade framework and fulfillment of our WTO commitments is one of the top economic priorities of the National Unity Government and His Excellency President Mr. Ashraf Ghani. I am hopeful that our discussion today will enable us to work jointly to address the specific challenges that are faced by our respective nations as we strive to successfully integrate in the global economy.

Thank you.