



Remarks

H.E. Francis M. Kai-Kai, Minister of Planning and Economic of Sierra Leone & chair of g7+

Ambassador-Level meeting of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group

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H.E. Ms Mawine G. Diggs, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia

Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang WTO Deputy-Director General

Excellency Ambassadors

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

Greetings from g7+

At the outset, let me extend our gratitude to the co-coordinators of the g7+ WTO Accession Group, the esteemed Missions of Liberia and Timor-Lest, the WTO Accession division and the g7+ Secretariat for steering the g7+ WTO group.

This group is an indispensable platform for helping conflict affected countries benefit from the World Trade system through advocacy and peer learning. Established with the vision of helping conflict affected countries accede to the World Trade Organization, the group has the potential to significantly contribute in making the world trade system more inclusive, fair and peace-oriented.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Least developed countries (LDCs), and in particular conflict affected countries have conventionally been passive players in the multilateral trading system. Overwhelmed by

decades of wars and their attendant consequences, these countries have been the recipients of foreign aid, policies, and ideas. Notwithstanding the membership our countries have in international institutions, we have been among the least heard. However, with the convening of the g7+ platform, every effort is being made to change that paradigm. Under the motto *“nothing about us without us”*, we have been able to form a narrative that better defines our context and priorities on every platform we engage. We have provided a platform for our member countries to speak with one voice for the peace and stability we want in our societies. In addition, we coined the concept of fragile-to-fragile cooperation; which facilitates peer learning among ourselves. Through this initiative, we have facilitated sharing of lessons that have been very relevant and inspiring for one another.

The establishment of g7+ WTO Accession Group was a major milestone in the efforts of pursuing inclusivity in the world trade system. Its role in making the multi-lateral trade system more inclusive can be instrumental. However unique our contexts have been, our transitions have been through common paths; our comparative lessons can inspire reforms at national and global levels.

It is in this context that I am very hopeful and ambitious that the g7+ WTO Accession Group can serve as an interface for discussion on how trade can be used to pursue prosperity in our countries. Therefore, I would like to leave you with 2 points as food for thought for today’s meeting.

First: No one can deny the importance of trade for social and economic development. The multi-lateral trade system under the auspices of WTO is a crucial factor in fostering shared prosperity. Access to free trade is often the subject of negotiation of rules and regulations. However, for us the conflict affected countries, trade is a means to increased jobs, livelihoods and hence peace and stability. This can only happen when we are able to get

maximum benefit from trade and those benefits trickle down to our citizens. It is this narrative that we should advance. It is this nexus we should advocate for.

Second: The g7+ WTO Accession Group has a major role to play in discourse on reforms that are needed to make the trade system more participatory and fairer. Therefore, I would like to see us even more active in and even coordinated in shaping a collective perspective of conflict affected countries in the upcoming Ministerial level meeting of WTO. It is our hope that such coordination will further help peer learning.

The g7+ secretariat is available to further interact with you all on these two points:

I thank you for your attention and wish you fruitful discussion.

Thank you!