



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

g7+ WTO Accessions Group

5 October 2021

Statement by Mr. Francisco Fernandes

Chargé d’Affaires at the Permanent Mission of Timor-Leste

Hon. Mawine G. Diggs, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia,

H.E. Ambassador Zhang, Deputy Director-General of the WTO

Distinguished representatives of the g7+ Secretariat

Excellencies,

Dear members of the g7+ WTO Accession Group and

Dear colleagues,

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to Hon. Minister Diggs for chairing this meeting of the Group and for your kind words. I am certain that under your leadership, the outcome of today’s meeting will contribute to advance the Group’s agenda for the multilateral trading system.

I further thank H.E. Ambassador Zhang, Deputy Director-General of the WTO for honouring us with your presence today. I thank you for your commitment to the Group and, in particular, to the acceding governments, as my own. Your presence shows that the WTO remains steadfast in its commitment to

support the integration of all nations, in particular, fragile and conflict-affected states in the WTO.

I join you, honourable Minister, in thanking my colleague, Mr. Paul Tate, Head of the Mission of Liberia for his collaboration with my Permanent Mission, and in paying tribute to Ambassador Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, former Permanent representative of Afghanistan to the WTO, who was the first coordinator of this Group and a true champion for the advocacy of trade for peace. I wish Ambassador Haqjo and all the good people of Afghanistan well in this transitional period, where above all, peace and security shall prevail.

With the support of all its members and of the WTO Secretariat, the g7+ WTO Accessions Group has become a major driven force in discussions between trade and peace. This group, that started as a platform for experience sharing between acceding and acceded governments to the WTO, with the purpose of facilitating accession, has then gained its bigger space in the international trade discussions, by exposing the main fragility of the current system: the inequality between major players and fragile and conflict-affected states.

Dear colleagues,

The effects of war on trade, the flaws of multilateralism and the challenges faced by fragile and post-conflict affected states are not new topics of concern. What is indeed new is the joint voice that the Group offers to its members and other interested delegations to send a strong message to the WTO membership and leadership and demand for accountability for all those countries that have been neglected when designing the current international trade policies.

With this being said, Timor-Leste supports the four proposals of the Chair:

1. To hold the second Ministerial meeting of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group on the margins of the Conference which takes place from 30 November to 4 December in Geneva;

My delegation shares the opinion that it's crucial to continue with the practice of the MC11, in 2017, and have a Ministerial meeting with the purpose of strengthening the commitment of the Group to the WTO and increase its visibility.

2. To issue a draft Ministerial Declaration of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group, to be adopted by Ministers at their second meeting,

The adoption of a new Ministerial Declaration will seize the momentum of discussions on trade and peace and will put forward the Group's vision towards the WTO and its future, as Honourable Minister Diggs mentioned. It will further serve the purpose of giving the acceding governments of the Group an opportunity to highlight their specific needs to the WTO Membership, something often difficult to do without the support of the acceded governments of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group. When recalling the specific needs of the fragile and conflict-affected states, the declaration should also call for further attention to the post-conflict accession phase. It's a misconception to view WTO accession as the ultimate goal for the states in the acceding process. Conditions shall be created to support those recent acceded governments to guarantee that better and more economic opportunities, jobs and revenue is being created and that those conditions will be sustainable for the future.

3. To develop a Work Programme on Trade for Peace dedicated to fragile and conflict-affected countries, which should be brought to the attention to all WTO Ministers;

This proposal is in line with my previous point, which is that now is the right moment to influence the future work of programme of the WTO, by proposing a work programme designed by fragile and conflict-affected countries with the aim of supporting, in a sustainable way, fragile and conflict-affected countries.

4. To make a statement at the upcoming meeting of the General Council on Thursday, to inform the WTO membership of the Group's intention for MC12.

Finally, Timor-Leste agrees with the fourth proposal of the Chair and seeks the guidance of Liberia in its availability to do so in the General Council this Thursday. The importance of the discussions that are being held within this Group justifies a formal communication to the WTO membership ahead of the MC12, especially because the documents prepared by us will be up for consideration to the whole WTO membership.

Dear colleagues,

This was my last point for now and I look forward to continue our discussion and hearing your views on the agenda of today's meeting.

I thank you.