



**The Republic of Sudan
Ministry of Trade and Supply**

Opening Statement

By

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At The

**Informal Working Party Meeting
of Sudan's Accession to the WTO**

Geneva, 17th March ,2021

H.E Mr. Katsuro Nagai – Chairperson of the working Party

H. E Mr. Alan Wolff. Deputy Director General of WTO

Excellencies and distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure and honor to address this important informal working party meeting on the accession of Sudan to the WTO, particularly as it comes after the second anniversary of the glorious revolution of the Sudanese people in December 2018.

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for your participation and support. Let me thank in particular H.E DDG Alan Wolff for his continuous and relentless support to the accession of Sudan and for his initiative on trade for peace which is of significant relevance to Sudan.

It's my pleasure to reiterate our sincere congratulations to the new Director General of WTO, Mrs. Ngozi Okongo Iweala for her well-deserved appointment, and to express our full support to her, we look forward to working closely with her.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to H.E Mr. Katsuro Nagai of Japan, the chair of the working party and the WTO secretariat for excellent preparations and guidance.

Mr. Chair

Please allow me to introduce my delegation, despite the virtual format of this meeting due the unprecedented situation imposed by the pandemic. My delegation includes H.E Ambassador Ali ibn Abi Talib Abdelrahman, the Permanent representative of Sudan in Geneva and Ambassador Osman Abufatima, DPR and the second Secretary Mrs. Mai Ejaimi. I have also with me from Khartoum Mrs Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim -Acting Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the WTO affairs and her distinguished team of experts on relevant fields of trade, customs, SPS, agriculture and investment.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the martyrs of the entirely peaceful and inspiring revolution of December 2018, which led to the triumph over the brutality of the previous regime and brought thirty years of oppression to an end and ushered the whole country into a new era of peace, freedom and justice.

The political landscape in Sudan changed dramatically since 2019, thanks to the men and woman and young people who rose up in massive numbers to demand change. Their movement culminated into the signing of the Constitutional Document on August 17th, 2019 to establish civilian led transitional government and launched a transitional process of three years' time to achieve sustainable peace, democracy and prosperity throughout the country.

The Transitional Government, led by Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, is mandated to pave the way for full democratic rule towards the end of the transitional period in 2022 when general elections are expected to be held. On October 3rd, 2020, Juba the capital of South Sudan witnessed the signing of the Peace Accord between the GOS and several armed movements, and resolved decades of conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile. The signatories of those agreement were able to join the recently formed cabinet to which I belong.

Mr. Chair

Sudan is undergoing a historic and once- in- a generation transition and change that touches every facet of life. Since its inception, the Government of Sudan engaged into addressing political and economic challenges, inherited from the former regime, through an integrated vision and clear priorities. One of the most important priorities is to seek the integration of the country once again into the multilateral financial, economic and trading systems.

In this regard the success of the government to negotiate the rescission of Sudan from the US list of States Sponsors Terrorisms was particularly important milestone that removed the biggest barrier to access the international financial institutions. Since then, Sudan has started a home-grown economic reform restructuring program monitored by the IMF, aims at stabilizing the economy, removing distortions, improving competitiveness and strengthening governance and eventual debt relief.

It is worth mentioning that, Paris will host a high-level economic conference for investment in Sudan in May 2021. The conference which comes after several conferences of the friends of Sudan, is aimed at encouraging foreign investment and financial flows as well as mobilization of international support.

Sudan has already embarked into serious reforms, despite the impact of the pandemic which exacerbated the economic hardship, causing a loss of 40% of public revenues. Among these painful reforms was the removal of the costly subsidies on energy, intended to meet the requirement of strong track record of macroeconomic performance to reach the decision point for debt relief.

Excellencies, and distinguished delegates

Sudan's accession process started in 1994. After a slow start, it registered good progress in 2003 and 2004 when the first and second working party were held, then went into dormancy and has been reactivated in 2017 when the third and fourth working party were conducted. Today, I am really hopeful that we will be able to resume the process of accession with new spirit of transparency and commitment and with firm conviction that it is in the best interest of the country to integrating into the multilateral trading system.

Mr. Chair

Let me reiterate the full political commitment of Sudan to conclude its accession process during the transitional period. This commitment is reflected in the Three-Year Program for stability and Economic Development 2021-2023 adopted recently. The program includes all necessary reforms to open up the economy and establish open, transparent, predictable and non-discriminatory trade regime. The vision stipulated in this program contains serious economic reforms. The most recent macroeconomic measure taken on the unification of the exchange rate was necessary to remove distortions from production and export. It is also an important tool to attract investment and financial liquidity through official channels and fight the parallel market, money laundering and smuggling, in addition to stabilising the price of basic goods.

Sudan believes that accession to WTO is significant for the diversification and modernization of its economy and boost investment attractiveness. It will

stimulate economic growth and address key development challenges. We believe that WTO agreements as the main source of legitimacy in trade policy making, can be used as instrument to make radical changes in both policies and institutions and fixing the ailing economy and combatting corruption. The economy would benefit from being part of the global value chain.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Sudan has recently received the Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area. We have already signed the agreement and undertaking several measures to ratify and accede to it very soon. Sudan is keen to integrate into the regional and continental economic groupings as building blocks for the global economy. With its great potential of human and natural resources including agriculture, livestock and minerals, among others, Sudan will contribute positively to the multilateral trading system. As an LDC, Sudan urges WTO members to facilitate and accelerate its accession process and to provide the necessary flexibilities and most needed technical assistance.

In closing, let me reiterate my thanks and appreciation to you Mr. Chair and to the accession division and to all members of the WTO for their support and to the working group members. As part of our commitment to accession, Sudan will host the regional dialogue for African acceding countries next June. I would also like to invite our development partners for the round table meeting scheduled on the 29th of March 2021.

I thank you.