



Remarks

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

Second Ministerial Meeting of the g7+ WTO Accession group

During 12th Ministerial conference of WTO

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

Excellency Joaquim Amaral, Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs of Timor-Leste

Excellency Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director of WTO

Excellencies, Colleague Ministers

Excellencies, Ambassadors

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

Greetings from (Freetown), Sierra Leone.

In my capacity as the Chair of the g7+, I would like to thank Liberia and Timor-Leste, the co-coordinators of the g7+ WTO accession group and the WTO accession division for organizing this meeting. We commend their efforts in supporting and convening the g7+ WTO accession group.

Since the establishment of the g7+ WTO accession group, the platform has played an important role in facilitating the sharing of lessons and hence supporting accession of member countries. This platform has the potential to voice the priorities and perspective of conflict affected countries in relation to multilateral trade system. This can further enhance the collective impact of our advocacy for better policies conducive to the situation of countries in conflict affected fragile situations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen!

Conflict affected countries such as those in the g7+ have huge potential for contribution to regional stability and development which has not yet been fully exploited for the welfare of their citizenry. Many are bestowed with natural resources that can contribute to national and regional prosperity. They are home to young population with the so-called demographic dividend, an important factor for development, if the potential is harnessed.

However, decades of wars, and the resulting fragility or ongoing low-level conflicts with serious political, economic and social governance challenges, have undermined the prospects for lasting peace, growth and development in g7+ Group of countries. Man-made and natural crises have made them vulnerable to external shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic that have disproportionately hurt them.

Today, we are grappling with the fall-out from the Russia-Ukraine war, which has unleashed devastating consequences well beyond their geopolitical borders. Global supply chains of essential commodities (particularly fuel and grains) have been disrupted, resulting in higher than normal prices which have been directly transmitted to the local markets in many countries, both low and high income. This is bound to increase inequality and poverty in the g7+ countries.

The prolonged conflicts and poverty have cost 10s of billions of dollars every year in the form of humanitarian, peacekeeping and development aid. Most of this assistance has focussed on consequences of conflicts and fragility, thereby failing to address the root causes of poverty and to harness the potential that these countries have.

Moreover, international policies and norms of aid, global trade and cooperation have not been conducive to the context of these countries. In other words, multilateralism has not been “multilateral” and inclusive enough to accommodate the needs and priorities of the

poorest countries. They have more often been the victims of hegemonic policies and norms of regional and global powers. The global south in general and the conflict affected countries in particular have historically fuelled development and welfare of most of the developed nations. They have provided raw materials to fuel the machinery of development and welfare of the developed and most prosperous nations. In return, these countries have perpetually suffered poverty and lasting fragility.

Against this preamble I would like to share 3 points as my contribution as the Chair of the g7+ that I hope will be help in our way forward for the g7+ WTO accession group.

First: The Russian occupation of Ukraine and its negative social, economic and political consequences have affected us all. We have felt its economic brunt all over the world. The shortage of food items caused by export restrictions due to war and hence the spike in prices has hurt poorest countries the hardest. Many of these countries such as those in the g7+ have already been home to humanitarian crisis. Globalization has increased inter-dependence and thus, the impact of this war has spilled over even widely. This crisis highlights the peace-trade nexus. It manifests the fact that wars have been the root cause of poverty everywhere.

Therefore, our trade-for-peace cause is even more relevant and we need to be even more assertive in our call.

Second: Developed nations have dominated the world trade and hence the multilateral trade system and policies. This has resulted in augmenting the inequality among nations. Contrary to the promises of free trade, most of LDCs are “least developed” because they have not had equitable share in the world trade. They have been elbowed away by the mightier nations. It is imperative for the shared peace, stability and prosperity that least developed countries be given fair access to global trade and economic opportunities. Their unique context needs to be recognized and appreciated. The g7+ WTO accession group is best

placed to broaden its coalition and collectively share this perspective in related policy discourse.

Third and Final: Lessons from countries in the global south have often inspired reforms in development. This is very true for countries within the g7+ group. Therefore, the g7+ WTO accession group is a useful platform to facilitate peer learning among members. Bounded by cooperation and solidarity, the first-hand experience of the member countries has proven helpful in pursuing stability.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to provide support to the g7+ WTO accession group. We believe that together we can make a change in the lives of our citizens through equitable and fair trade and cooperation.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a fruitful deliberation.