Minister Manetelu's statement for IGAG Meeting:

Your Excellency Mr. Jamshid Khodjaev, Deputy Prime-Minister of Uzbekistan and the Coordinator of the Informal Group of Governments (IGAG).

Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General of WTO

H.E. Mr. Ahmed Ali Bazi, Minister of Economy, Industry and Investment, and Chief Negotiator of Comoros.

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, joining the other participants, let me congratulate the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the WTO Secretariat for the successful preparation of the 13th Ministerial Conference.

I would also like to present our sincere gratitude to all of WTO members for the warm welcome extended to the Union of Comoros and Timor-Leste as its 165th and 166th members.

Joining the WTO signifies a commitment to global trade, cooperation, and economic integration. However, it also presents a set of challenges and opportunities that demand careful consideration.

Firstly, let's acknowledge the benefits. Accession to the WTO opens doors to a vast network of trading partners, fostering economic growth through increased exports and investments. It promotes transparency, predictability, and fair competition, essential for a thriving global marketplace. Moreover, adherence to WTO rules strengthens the rule of law and helps resolve disputes through a structured mechanism, ensuring a level playing field for all member states.

However, the journey towards WTO accession is not without its obstacles. This has been proved throughout Timor-Leste's accession process since 2016 until the ad-referendum approval of its accession package during the 7th and Last Working Party Meeting in Geneva on January 11 this year.

Negotiating the terms of entry can be arduous, requiring significant adjustment to domestic policies and regulations. This process may challenge certain industries, disrupt established practices, and necessitate reforms to meet international standards. Additionally, there may be concerns about safeguarding national interests, protecting vulnerable sectors, and ensuring that the benefits of trade are equitably distributed across society.

Looking ahead, the future of WTO accession holds both promise and uncertainty. As the global economy evolves, new challenges emerge, from digital trade and intellectual property rights to environmental sustainability and labor standards.

Adapting to these changes requires ongoing cooperation, flexibility, and innovation. It also calls for a renewed commitment to inclusive growth, where the gains from trade reach all segments of society, including marginalized communities and developing nations.

Excellency, ladies and gentlemen

In conclusion, acceding to the WTO is a significant step towards greater economic integration and prosperity. While it presents challenges, the benefits far outweigh the costs, provided that we approach it with foresight, collaboration, and a commitment to fairness. By embracing the opportunities of WTO membership and addressing its challenges head-on, we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous global economy for generations to come.

Last but not least, I would like to thank WTO Secretariat for assisting Timor-Leste in completing all the required and necessary processes up to today's signing ceremony. We are looking forward with great eagerness to your support during the post-accession process and working with you all, in ensuring a fair access to trade that would benefit all the WTO members, putting aside the status of each member state.

I thank you for your kind attention. Obrigado