

**OPENING STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR  
(DR.) AMINA MOHAMED, EGH, CAV,  
CABINET SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, KENYA DURING A REGIONAL  
DIALOGUE CONFERENCE ON WTO ACCESSIONS  
FOR THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA, 28<sup>TH</sup>  
AUGUST 2017 INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL,  
NAIROBI, KENYA**

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**The Vice Chancellor University of Nairobi  
Prof. Peter Mbithi and his collaborations  
especially Prof. Tabitha Ng'ang'a**

**Maika Oshikawa, the Director of Accessions,  
Representatives of International  
Organizations, and colleague at the WTO  
Secretariat**

**H.E. Dr. Bekele Bulado Bukana, Minister for Trade of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,**

**H.E. Ms. Khadra Ahmed Dualeh, Minister for Commerce & Industry of the Federal Republic of Somalia,**

**H.E. Mr. Elsadig Mohamed Ali, State Minister of Trade of the Republic of Sudan,**

**H.E. Mr. Moses Hassan Ayet, Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment of the Republic of South Sudan,**

**H.E. Mr. Axel M. Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia,**

**H.E. Dr. Zhang Xiangchen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent**

**Mission of the People's Republic of China to  
the WTO,**

**Amb Stephen Karau,**

**Ms. Hilda Al-Hinai, Deputy Permanent  
Representative, Permanent Mission of Oman  
to the WTO,**

**Ms. Cillia Mangroo, Principal Secretary,  
Trade Department, Ministry of Finance,  
Trade and Economic Planning of the  
Republic of Seychelles,**

**Mr. Gabriel Magetu of AFDB**

**Mr. Nagib A. Hamim, Economic Attaché,  
Permanent Mission of Yemen in Geneva,**

**Ambassadors/High Commissioners from  
Geneva and Nairobi**

**Distinguished Participants,**

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to Nairobi for a **Regional Dialogue Conference on WTO Accessions**. Karibuni Sana. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the WTO Secretariat and the University of Nairobi, School of Economics for organizing the first-of its kind regional dialogue meeting. Let me also extend my gratitude to the WTO, not only for co-organizing this conference, but also for the continued support it has extended to Kenya and the entire African continent. As a country, we are greatly honoured to host this session as an offshoot of having successfully hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference for the first time in Africa in December, 2015. **May I also say that it was the most successful**

**Ministerial that I can remember for the work programme as well as accessions.**

## **Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

WTO is unique. It is the only rule based multilateral trade organization. It provides a platform for member countries to negotiate trade rules that govern the conduct of multilateral trade. Since its inception in 1995, we have witnessed a tremendous increase in membership from 125 to 164 to-date. Clearly demonstrating confidence in the WTO and its role in promoting trade and the integration of countries into the multilateral trading system. The WTO accession process through which countries gain their entry, has been

critical in edging the WTO towards becoming a universal body.

With 43 African members, representing nearly one quarter of the WTO's 164-membership, Africa has become an important player in the multilateral trading system. A role that would be even more significant if the 8 countries on the queue for membership would join. Some of those are Neighbours situated within the Greater Horn of Africa.

**Distinguished Guests**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This regional dialogue conference provides us with an opportunity, to among others, exchange views on three key areas:

**First,** it provides an avenue to share experiences and lessons learnt from the accession processes. Let me start by stating that Kenya is a founding member of the WTO having joined the organization at its inception in 1995. Unlike other countries, we did not go through the accession process under Article 12 of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO. However, we have had an opportunity to understand the working of the organization. We have had the privilege of taking up important leadership roles in various bodies of the WTO, which has given us

tremendous insight that we are ready to share with the acceding countries.

We are lucky to have the participation of representatives from the recently acceded members who will be sharing their valuable knowledge.

In December 2015, we were honoured to participate in the accession of Afghanistan and Liberia in Nairobi during the Tenth Ministerial Conference. Afghanistan's Deputy President led the accession team to Nairobi while Liberia's was led by Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Hon. Addy of Liberia is here with us to share their latest accession experience.

**Second,** the conference provides us with the opportunity to reflect on ways in which the WTO membership can foster regional integration and cooperation. This is crucial considering that the priority of the continent is to deepen and intensify regional economic integration. In the Greater Horn of Africa, most countries belong to similar economic blocs, namely, the East African Community, COMESA and IGAD. The member countries to these regional blocs are also part of the broader ongoing Tripartite and CFTA negotiations.

The accession of the sister countries in the region will directly contribute to the smooth finalization of the negotiations and ultimately promote intra-African trade which is extremely low compared to other regions of the world.

**Third,** the conference seeks to mobilize support for facilitating and accelerating African accessions. As we all know, the accession process to the WTO is often complex and demanding. It requires a substantive commitment by acceding countries: both financial and technical, as well as, a political commitment at the highest level. It is therefore important that acceding countries are supported and encouraged to finalize the negotiations and join the World Trade Organization.

It has been demonstrated that the accession process promotes domestic reforms that are necessary for countries to achieve competitiveness. It is also widely acknowledged today including in WTO reports, that members that

have negotiated their terms have grown faster, been more successful at attracting investments and shown greater resilience during economic downturns. In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that countries are using the accession template to define the parameters of country specific reforms to adapt to a rapidly changing global economy.

Regrettably, as part of the organization is continuously renewed by accessions, some are still left behind. I would argue that it is in this context that the organization must reset itself, update its mission and make a key contribution that strengthens global markets. It is and was never about just rounds. Accessions have been at the forefront of trade negotiations, they talk to

domestic liberalization and address the fundamental *raison d'être* of trade talks- "the opening of markets". It is in the paradox of these challenges and opportunities that I believe the WTO's role to contribute to solutions and to global governance actually lies.

I am confident that our deliberations in this conference will go a long way in contributing to Africa's Regional Integration as a strategy of increasing trade and economic development. Regional Integration is one of the main priorities of Agenda 2063, the long-term development framework of Africa. It is also among the 5 priorities identified by the African Development Bank to be implemented in the next ten years.

It is indeed timely that this dialogue is happening in Nairobi, and by extension, in Africa at a moment when the negotiations for the Continental Free Trade Area are evolving rapidly. Just this week the technical working groups meeting in Durban has moved rapidly and aggressively to update and modernize the trade policy agenda not only continentally but globally, in ways that are quicker and faster than any other region. They made significant breakthroughs in trade in goods and services. As a participant in them, Kenya urges the WTO to be attentive to the progress being made in the CFTA. After all, movement is also about using the traction created by others to accelerate progress. That is timeless wisdom used by all to grow their economies and develop their countries.

This time we expect the traction to come from Africa: the continent of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ignore it at your own peril.

Finally let me wish our neighbours who are also acceding countries well and pledge to accompany all of you on your incredible journey.

With these few remarks, I wish to declare this Regional Dialogue Conference officially open.

**Thank you.**

**25<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2017**  
**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**NAIROBI**