

Welcoming Remarks

By

**H.E. Mr. Melaku Alebel, Minister of Ministry of Trade and
Industry of**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

In

The Third regional Dialogue on WTO accessions for Africa

At

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

12th of February, 2020

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Good Morning

- **Ambassador Alan Wolff, Deputy Director General of the World Trade Organisation**
- **H.E. Mr Medani Abbas Medani Mohamed, Minister for Industry and Trade, Republic of Sudan**
- **H.E. Mr Domingo Mba Esono Nsang, Vice Minister of Commerce and Promotion of SMEs, Equatorial Guinea**
- **Mr Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry, African Union Commission (AUC)**
- **Ms Maika Oshikawa, Director of Accession Division ; World Trade Organisation**
- **Mr Stephen Karingi, Director, Regional Integration and Trade Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We are very delighted and honoured to host this **Third regional dialogue on WTO accessions for Africa with a theme of "Deepening economic integration through WTO membership and AfCFTA implementation."**

On behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and myself, we are pleased to welcome you all to Addis Ababa.

እንኳን ደህና መጣችሁ።

Let me take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the WTO, the other partners of the event and most importantly, Ambassador Wolff and his team, not only for organizing this regional dialogue for a third time, but also for supporting Ethiopia's accession negotiation.

I recognize that this regional dialogue forum is principally designed to discuss the opportunities and challenges of WTO accession and regional economic integration such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the role of these engagements in reforming our economies and the way how we should create synergies between WTO and AfCFTA.

This is a very timely event. Just a week ago, we successfully held our 4th working party meeting, a key task in our WTO negotiation, after more than 8 years of stalemate. Ethiopia has also been an active and founding member of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The Fact that Ethiopia is active in enhancing its trade relations both at the multilateral and regional arena is a result of our commitment and the profound economic, social and political reforms the country has undergone recently.

In a very short period of time the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has unveiled wide-ranging economic reform measures in several areas. Among others, **GoE's home grown economic reform initiative includes strong commitment to enhance the role of the private sector in the economy** where it is already taking concrete measures to privatize and liberalize various industries including in strategic sectors such as telecommunication, power, industrial parks, sugar as well as logistics and transport sectors.

Similarly, Ethiopia has made ample progress in reforming its investment regime while it is taking concrete actions to improve its business climate. Ethiopia has increasingly and successfully positioned itself as a competitive investment destination over recent years. It has been able to attract a growing investment inflow, and larger individual investments.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

While Ethiopia's commitment to create favourable investment, climate play the major role in ensuring its global competitiveness, membership to regional and global trade platforms enhance the credibility of our reforms. **Government of Ethiopia sees its WTO accession negotiation as a key tool to consolidate and anchor its domestic economic reform that have been achieved so far and make further progress.**

In this sense our initiative to membership of the WTO not as an end in itself but as a key element in the pursuit of national development policy objectives.

In addition, membership to a rules-based system will be instrumental in securing a predictable and secured market access for Ethiopia's exports. It goes without saying that Ethiopia's economic relation with the world is too important to be left to a maze of arbitrary, shifting and unstable preferential arrangements. A rules-based, predictable and secured foreign market access will become more relevant once Ethiopia has achieved its objective to become a middle-income country and its exports will no longer benefit from LDCs preferences.

Furthermore, membership to the WTO and other regional integration efforts are attuned to continuing Ethiopia's historic role in being an active player both in

regional and international diplomatic arena. In accordance with the Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed vision of '*a region where minds are open to ideas and markets are open to goods*', the government has taken measures that clearly indicate its commitment towards regional economic integration.

This is why in addition to the on-going effort to bring about economic integration in the Horn region, The Ethiopian Government has actively participated in the negotiations leading to the Establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Ethiopia has ratified the agreement establishing the AfCFTA, making it one of the original members of this historic agreement. Ethiopia's ratification of the AfCFTA and resumption of its WTO negotiation are clear manifestations of its commitment to regional and global economic integration.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

In this regard, this third regional dialogue, provides us with unique opportunity to share ideas on several fronts;

- First, it helps to exchange experiences of countries with the accession negotiation processes and lessons learnt from recently acceded countries.
- Second, this dialogue provides us with a unique an Opportunity to understand the linkages and complementarity between the WTO accession with AfCFTA implementation.

- Third, it enables to understand the impact of our economic reforms on side of regional and international organization as well as private sector perspective.
- Fourth, I hope we will share among ourselves the challenges faces in the negotiation process by acceding countries and collectively find solutions to reach our shared objectives.

I encourage all of us to make the most out of our gathering here. I am confident that the desired outcome of this Meeting will provide the renewed commitment to enhance and finalize our WTO accession negotiation.

With the attendance of experts and people with different countries and backgrounds, I believe that the outcomes of the discussion will also be useful for many outside this room.

Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the WTO, UNECA, AU, World Bank and ITC for organizing this regional dialogue and the excellent arrangements.

I would also like to thank all those present today.

Finally, while you are in Ethiopia, do not forget you are seven years younger, and in your stay in Addis Ababa, I recommend some must see places: The Ethnological Museum, the National Museum which houses the famous “Lucy”, the stained glass of the Giorgis Cathedral, Merkato market, the largest open air market in Africa and Piazza, Addis Ababa’s mesmeric old town.

Ethiopia being the origin coffee, I would like to invite you all to enjoy the taste of our high quality coffee.

I wish you a fruitful deliberation and look forward to the positive outcome of this event. With these remarks, I declare the Third regional dialogue on WTO accessions for Africa officially opened.

Thank you for your attention!

አመሰግናለሁ