

CLOSING STATEMENT

**BY AMBASSADOR MESGANU ARGA MOACH,
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Excellency Ministers, Ambassadors and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you again for the closing session of this important 3rd round WTO Regional Dialogue for African acceding countries which is dedicated to the late Ambassador Chiedu Osakwe – who I believe is an important figure whose contributions deserve recognition.

I also wish to congratulate Somalia for the successful compilation of the MFTR ready for submission to the WTO.

It was indeed a successful week where we discussed and exchanged experience on important agendas of our time - Continental and Global Integration with a focus on AfCFTA negotiation and WTO Accession. The range of discussions on the topics Africa and the Multilateral Trading System; Economic Impact of Market Opening; Maximising the Benefits of the AfCFTA through WTO Accession; Building Synergies in Substance and Process were all relevant and important for our ongoing negotiation and accession process

I believe, all of us who took part in this forum should be committed to follow-up and devise implementable interventions for the issues that have been forwarded and shared experiences. Such forums' effectiveness is not only measured by the ranges of delegates convened or the diverse topics covered; rather the core measure of effectiveness relies on the extent of learning that delegates take away and implement in their respective nations and institutions. Hence, I would call upon all to commit to transferring important outputs of the dialogue into actual practices.

Excellencies,

The discussion we have had on creating synergy between multilateral and regional trade union is vital. AfCFTA is an area where we can create a greater synergy as a continent and economic benefit for our respective nations. Furthermore, the spillover effect of this integration goes beyond just trade, rather its positive impact trickles down to many of the economic challenges that we are facing today. The harmonization and integration of the African nations through the AfCFTA could be strategically leveraged to create synergy with the WTO Agreement. It is also understandable that the parallel engagement in the WTO accession and regional integration efforts have direct or indirect implications on the WTO accession and *vice versa*.

African governments have been highlighting the significant lag in intra-Africa trade among nations which is considerably lower than other regions of the globe. I am confident that the successful implementation of the AfCFTA is expected to play a key role in enhancing the intra-trade relation.

Ladies, Gentlemen,

Ethiopia is currently undergoing a homegrown economic reform which is spearheaded by Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed, and is creating '*a region where minds are open to ideas and markets are open to goods*', accordingly the Government of Ethiopia has attached great importance for regional trade integration as a driving factor for our economic development. In relation to this we have been exerting maximum effort in expediting our accession to WTO and in ratifying the AfCFTA, which is Ethiopia's first experience in joining a full-fledged free-trade area.

The fact that most of the WTO acceding African countries are from the Greater Horn region can help in accelerating regional and continental integration. In doing so, I believe the topic of this third regional dialogue discussing the synergy between WTO Membership and AfCFTA Implementation has become very relevant and timely.

Furthermore, I am confident that this dialogue forum has been instrumental in bringing trade negotiators and experts, including from recently acceded countries together to share lessons from our respective negotiation experiences. As there is no single manual to guide us through the maze of the WTO accession process, I encourage negotiators continue this important engagement at different levels.

I think it is equally important to recognize and appreciate the effort of the organizers, who have dedicated sessions to deliberate on the perspectives of the private sector. After all it is business and individuals that trade, not governments. Hence, it is important that not only we consult but give a chance for the private sector to play an active role in shaping the nature of trade relations. In this regard, it is imperative to create a robust and conducive environment for the private sector growth so that we create more jobs and new economic opportunities, alleviate poverty, and thereby contribute to peace and stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If we focus and deliver on the aforementioned areas, I don't see any reason why we cannot fulfil our plan of creating a prosperous and fully integrated Africa through Trade!

I hope all the panels we have had this week have met your expectations. And, Ethiopia have been a pleasant host!

I would like to conclude by thanking all delegates for coming from all over the world to attend this forum and sharing extensive wealth of information and experience during the panels. I would also like to thank representatives of the recently acceded countries who kindly accepted to participate and share their accession experiences. All your presence made the dialogue a success.

On behalf of the Government of Ethiopia, I would also thank our partners – the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Secretariat, the AU, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the World Bank Group.

Thank you.