

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Fonoto of Samoa,
Your Excellency Director General Lamy,
Ministers and excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I shall start by extending on behalf of the Chinese government my warm welcome to all of you to the Beijing 2012 Round Table on WTO Accession Best Practices for Least Developed Countries.

LDCs are important members of the international community. Effective engagement in the multilateral trading system represented by the World Trade Organization is the course and guarantee that LDCs must take and have to integrate in and benefit from globalization as well as get rid of poverty. China firmly believes that the speedy and all-around development of least developed countries will contribute significantly to the lasting prosperity of the world.

The Chinese government has always paid a lot of attention to issues in relation to LDCs and made real efforts to attain United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and echo the Monterrey Consensus. We have stepped up support to trade of LDCs, assisted them to effectively engage in the multilateral trading system, helped promote their production capability and enhance the competitiveness of their exports so that they can diversify their economies and achieve sustainable development. For three consecutive years since 2008 China has been the biggest market for exports of LDCs by absorbing 23% of total export of LDCs. China's import from LDCs had increased by an average annual growth rate of 24% from 2000 to 2010, much faster than that of developed economies. We announced in November 2011 to provide zero duty treatment for 97% of tariff lines of exports of LDCs, a move that truly honours the commitment of the Declaration of Hong Kong Ministerial Conference and a contribution to the Doha Round negotiations on quota-free, duty-free market access.

Accession to the WTO is a journey full of hardships which consumes a large amount of human, material and financial resources. Challenges faced by LDCs that lack resources and have only vulnerable economic basis are even more daunting. Similarly, constrained by their development level, those LDCs that are already members of the WTO cannot fully benefit from the multilateral trading system. It took China 15 years to accede to the Organization as a developing country. So we in China are well aware of all these challenges and hardships and therefore are ready to do our best to help LDCs join the WTO at an early date.

First, we have made regular contribution to the WTO's initiative of Aid for Trade, and by working with the WTO Secretariat we have set up a "China LDC Programme". This Programme will be continued under which we will organize seminars on LDC accession and fund the internship of students from acceding LDCs and other LDCs at the WTO Secretariat. We aim to help LDC familiarize themselves with the accession

process and learn WTO rules and operating procedures so that they can accelerate their accession processes.

Second, we will continue to proactively participate in and push ahead with the negotiations on the simplification of procedures for accession of LDCs. Given that only five LDCs joined the WTO in the past ten years, we, in conjunction with other members, launched at the 8th Ministerial Conference the negotiations on further streamlining accession procedures for LDCs and later made active responses to LDCs' requests on criterion of market access commitments, special and differentiated treatment and technical assistance.

Third, China is the only member of the WTO that commits not to put on acceding LDCs any market access requests, a step we make to support LDCs' accession. At the same time through bilateral meetings and seminars, we have shared accession experience with LDCs like Laos and provide them with recommendation on their accession efforts. In addition, the former Chinese representative and present ambassador to the WTO who both served in succession as Chair of the Working Group on the accession of Laos played a positive role in facilitating Laos' accession. Today we have with us representatives of Lao and Yemen, another priority acceding LDC. We sincerely hope that with our concerted efforts, these two LDCs can join the big family of the WTO as early as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We always believe that accession of more LDCs to the WTO can increase the representativeness and universality of the Organization, can consolidate and strengthen the multilateral trading system, and therefore will lead to the result of win for all. As a fold Chinese saying goes, "The flames rise high when everybody adds fuel". It is in this spirit that we call on the entire WTO membership for collective efforts to try to agree no later than July this year on the improvement of existing procedures for LDC's accession as institutional facilitation and guarantee for WTO accession of LDCs. In so doing, more LDCs will be embraced by the WTO and the multilateral trading system will develop into greater strength.

Last but not least, I wish this Round Table a great success. I also hope all the participants will have a pleasant stay in China.

Thank you.