



**REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE  
MINISTRO COORDENADOR DE ASSUNTOS ECONÓMICOS**

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***III EDITION OF THE TRADE FOR PEACE WEEK***  
***Fragility and Conflict: Building Peace through Trade and Economic Integration***  
***14-18 November 2022***

**H.E. Minister Joaquim Amaral**  
**Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Chief Negotiator**  
**Becoming a WTO member: Trade for Peace angle – Thinking Ahead**  
**Session 5 – 18 November**

Your Excellency Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director of Accessions of the WTO,

Your Excellency Ambassador Rui Macieira, Chairperson of the Working Party on Timor-Leste's accession,

Your Excellency Mr. Said Salime, Secretary General of the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Investment of the Union of the Comoros,

Your Excellency Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Trade and Industries and Chief Negotiator of Afghanistan's accession to the WTO,

Your Excellency Mr. Axel Addy, former Minister of Commerce and Industry and former Chief Negotiator of Liberia's accession to the WTO,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of International Organizations,

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon Geneva and good evening Dili,

First, I would like to thank the WTO Secretariat for organising this event and for the sound support given to the Trade for Peace initiative of the g7+ WTO Accessions Working Group.

Timor-Leste is proud of being one of the founding members of the g7+ and co-chair of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group, together with Liberia. We welcome the recent expansion of the Trade for Peace discussions to all Fragile and Conflict-Affected states in the WTO. We are committed to continue boosting this initiative and keep on working for the establishment of a WTO Work Programme on Trade for Peace for FCS at the 13<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference next year.

Let me also start by announcing you that, in the last Summit of ASEAN, a few days ago, the Leaders of the ASEAN countries have agreed to admit, in principle, Timor-Leste, as the 11<sup>th</sup> member of ASEAN. An objective criteria-based roadmap is to be formalized for Timor-Leste's full membership, hopefully, next year.

This announcement is the result of our constant and relentless hard work as well as our commitment to do “whatever it takes” to join the Community of ASEAN as well as to become active competitors in the international trade of goods and services as full members of the World Trade Organization.

We are strongly committed to becoming a full member of the WTO in 2023. This can be achieved thanks to our strong dedication and hard work, supported by the Working Party Chair, Ambassador Rui Macieira and the WTO Secretariat. I would like to use the opportunity to thank WTO Members for the continued engagement and support to our accession and our development partners for their extensive assistance in our accession journey.

**Excellences,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It has been a long way since 2015, when Timor-Leste submitted its application to the WTO. Today, seven years later, I am proud to say that we have made enormous progress in all fronts: multilateral, plurilateral, and bilateral:

- In the last two years, we had four meetings of the Working Party. Today, we are close to finalising the draft Report of the Working Party. The Report contains an extensive set of commitments which we are ready to undertake.
- We have circulated ambitious Market Access Offers in Goods and Services and we have undergone a thorough review of our foreign trade regime, supported by Members. Several rounds of questions and responses helped us to identify specific areas that needed further attention to achieve WTO compliance.
- At a plurilateral level, we have decided to go for the “extra mile” and join plurilateral agreements like the Agreement on Government Procurement or the Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation. We have been the first LDC and acceding government to join the latter. In addition, Timor-Leste has announced its commitment to join the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) and the ITA Expansion Agreement (ITA-II), which will eliminate its tariffs on a number of IT products classified under the Agreements.
- I am also pleased to update you on the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral market access negotiations with Members. We have closed bilateral market Offers with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Philippines. We have also finalized substantive negotiations with Japan and the European Union, with only minor issues still to be agreed upon. We aim to also finalize and sign Bilateral Market Access Agreements with Cambodia and Thailand before the end of the year, and we are working hard to be able to do the same with Indonesia and the United States.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The accession process to the WTO is without doubt an anchor for the implementation of critical economic and structural reforms necessary to achieve economic prosperity and lasting peace.

Our response to the question "*Why the accession should be concluded in 2023?*" is a simple one: Because we are ready for WTO membership.

I trust that our case demonstrates how much you can achieve in a short period of time. During our accession process, we have managed to regulate unregulated sectors and to adapt others to comply with ASEAN and WTO guidelines. We are in the process of improving the capacities of our public institutions at both technical and human resources levels. We have introduced a great number of measures to improve our business enabling environment and, at the same time, to increase the readiness of our private sector to make it able to compete in a more international and liberal environment. The accession process has also implied the development of our legal structures to the "next level" in many sectors.

All in all, we wouldn't have evolved this fast without the strong need to integrate in the WTO and ASEAN. I hope that you will agree with me if I say that, regardless of the outcome, the reforms within the processes of accession, are laying the foundations for Timor-Leste to be a reliable economic partner, an attractive destination for investment and a significant player on the global stage.

We are aware that this journey is long and will continue well beyond our accession to the WTO. We are sure that, as we continue down this path, we will be able to realize the aspirations of the Timorese People to create a prosperous and strong Nation able to defend our interests and to guarantee the prosperity and well-being of our population in today's complex world.

**Excellences,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me also add a general observation: the link between Trade and Peace, or the use of Trade as a tool to maintain Peace, has been constant and has proven to be critical throughout history.

We can see how the so-called Black Sea Grain Deal is playing a role in the war between Russia and Ukraine. Both countries have been able to sit and talk about “Trade” as they announced yesterday that the Deal will be extended for another 120 days. The leaders of the G-20 reunited in Bali have highlighted the importance of this Deal, not only because of what it means for both Parties at war but also because of the consequences that the disruptions of the supply chain and the lack of grain provokes in terms of social instability and conflict in grain-dependant LDCs and FCS.

For Timor-Leste, as an LDC, being member of the WTO and thus having access to the global market of goods and services is essential to promote peace and stability. As for any other vulnerable country, having access to the world supply chain of products is specially importance to ensure internal stability. A country without access to the markets is a country sowing the seeds for crisis. Let’s not forget that the French Revolution exploded in a peek of the price of bread. The Ukrainian grain crisis has also provoked episodes of instability in some developing countries whose population has seen limited their access to such a basic-needs product.

For Timor-Leste WTO membership means integration. As we conclude the Trade for Peace Week today, let me quote H.E. President Ramos Horta:

*“It is obvious that in this increasingly complex world of interconnectedness and interdependency – and of challenges, risks and opportunities – multilateralism, regional integration and cooperation and a rules-based world order are sine qua non conditions for peace, security and prosperity for all. Together we can prevail, divided we fail.”*

As a young and aspiring nation, Timor-Leste cannot stay out of the regional and global trade frameworks. For us, WTO membership is part and parcel of

our commitment to a rules-based world order. By subjecting ourselves to the rules of the WTO, we rebrand and restructure our economy, aiming to achieve faster development and growth, to become an attractive market and to signal to the world that we are ready for cooperation and partnerships, adding our voice to the WTO choir.

As the g7+ is saying: "*Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development*". This is what the WTO membership is about for us.

We think that the Trade for Peace program can make a difference and have an important role in promoting the integration and participation of conflict-affected states in the multilateral trading system. The implementation of initiatives within the program, fighting against inequality with well-functioning supply chains, and addressing fragility and conflict by promoting economic integration and growth, will definitely make a change for fragile and conflict-affected states.

Thank you very much.