

## **EU Statement – WTO Accession of Afghanistan, 17 December 2015**

Mr Chairman, Minister,

- As a further confirmation of all WTO members' commitment to facilitate the integration of LDCs in the multilateral trading system, we have gathered again today to welcome Afghanistan to WTO.
- Let me congratulate the government of Afghanistan for this significant achievement. In a context of political and security difficulties, the efforts undertaken to pass reforms are particularly commendable.
- The EU reaffirms its continued commitment to support Afghanistan. We are honoured to co-chair the next year's comprehensive Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Brussels. It will be a further opportunity to mobilise the required political and financial support for Afghanistan's stabilization.
- The EU encourages Afghanistan to continue on the demanding but surely rewarding path of reforms. We now welcome Afghanistan as a Member of a strong rules-based system ensuring a level playing-field for all players.
- In this context, the post-accession phase will be crucial: implementing all commitments undertaken will require both significant additional work and technical assistance.
- The EU is ready to do its part: together with our MS, we will keep delivering technical assistance. Furthermore, we have recently put into place a new 3-year programme to assist Afghanistan and the EU Everything But Arms regime will continue to apply.

- We are confident that commitments undertaken by Afghanistan will help to develop a more predictable, transparent and competitive trade and business regime and, in this way, will improve the livelihood of the population and create new job opportunities.
- The EU firmly believes that WTO rules are an important tool to foster development, and that LDCs are those who can benefit the most from the multilateral trading system.
- Having achieved two accessions of LDCs at MC10 is a strong signal of how the WTO is open, inclusive, and mindful of those most in need.
- The EU is fully committed to keep working hard to make sure that all countries willing to become Members of the WTO will be able to do so.
- Minister, my last words go to your government and the Secretariat to thank you and your teams for the hard work that made your accession possible. We can all be proud of welcoming Afghanistan to the WTO, a tangible sign of this organization's inclusiveness.