

ACCESSION OF AFGHANISTAN TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

**STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM
17 DECEMBER 2015**

I warmly welcome Afghanistan to the WTO community.

It has been a long road, 11 long years of negotiation but today Afghanistan becomes the ninth least-developed country to join the WTO since 1995.

This is a truly momentous occasion.

Afghanistan joins 161 other members to benefit from greater access to the global trading system.

Accession is an important step towards Afghanistan's integration into the multilateral trading system, and a symbolic moment in Afghanistan's "Transformation Decade".

It enables Afghanistan to develop trade links which can in time reduce its dependence on foreign aid.

WTO membership will drive domestic reforms to strengthen market institutions, and provide the framework for Afghanistan to properly integrate itself as a trading nation within its immediate region, as a bridge between Central and South Asia.

Your accession is a remarkable achievement considering your very challenging starting point as one of the least developed countries in the world - emerging out of conflict.

We are proud of the role the UK has played in helping to achieve progress.

We have an enduring commitment to Afghanistan.

Most recently, we decided to maintain our military commitment to NATO's Resolute Support Mission through 2016 at around 450 personnel.

This year the UK will spend around £290 million in aid alongside up to £100 million this year to support the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and other conflict reduction programmes.

We have provided over £300,000 on trade funding since 2004, to support the management of Afghanistan's portfolio of international trade negotiations, including WTO accession

And are committed to working with President Ghani, Dr Abdullah, and the National Unity Government to help improve

the lives of all Afghans, and build a secure and stable Afghanistan.

We hope our continued support will enable Afghanistan to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by accession – congratulations Afghanistan.