

## **Statement by the Commerce Minister on Afghanistan Accession**

Thank you chair.

We warmly welcome the Afghan delegation, led by H.E. the First Deputy Chief Executive of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khan.

Pakistan fully supports the accession of Afghanistan into the WTO. Afghanistan is our esteemed neighbour and third largest trading partner. It is very heartening to know that Afghanistan has taken this bold step towards more global integration. Pakistan stand with our neighbour in its efforts to overcome internal and external challenges.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a unique geographical position as a gateway to Central Asia. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) are two initiatives which provide an opportunity to both the countries to take advantage of huge benefits that might accrue in the future by better integration within the regional and eventually the global economies. Forthcoming CASA 1000 – Central Asia – South Asia regional Electricity market between Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan and TAPI –Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan India gas pipeline will further speed up the regional economic integration.

The Electronic Data Interchange being set up between Afghanistan and Pakistan will better achieve data sharing and better coordination between the border agencies of the two countries, Afghanistan's accession will further facilitate the process.

Chair, Pakistan has ratified the TFA, being the only South Asian country to do so. Coupled with Afghanistan's accession this will go a long way in facilitating bilateral and transit trade between the two brotherly countries.

Congratulations to Afghanistan for the hard work done for the accession. Thomas Paine said "We have in our power to begin the world a new" Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbours, trading partners, energy connectivity partners and now fellow WTO members.

Let us grow together, trade together, to fight poverty in our midst.

Welcome to WTO