

Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference
Accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Statement by the Russian Federation

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Russian Federation let me congratulate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on this important day.

It has been a long road — and it has not always been easy. Indeed, the accession process has taken 11 years. But that just underlines how much work has been done — and what an achievement you have reached.

The WTO accession process provides a platform for domestic reforms, which are necessary for all countries to grow, develop and prosper. As a result, WTO Members design their economic, trade and investment policies within a stable, predictable, and rules-based system.

Thus, by concluding its accession negotiations, Afghanistan has sent a clear signal to all its trading partners that it is ready to engage fully in the multilateral trading system and in the global economy – and we strongly welcome this indication.

Unfortunately, our bilateral trade relations with Afghanistan have faced a rough patch this year. Since the beginning of 2015 our trade turnover has decreased to 136,8 million US dollars, with a decline in both exports and imports. Despite this negative trend, we believe that Afghanistan's accession to the WTO will have a positive impact on our trade and Afghanistan's economic ties with Russia in general.

It is important to note that the conclusion of this least-developed country's accession is a win-win both for the LDCs and the WTO as a whole. The expansion of the WTO to include a new member, particularly an LDC, will only strengthen the multilateral trading system which we are all part of.

Of utmost importance is that the WTO membership can make a significant difference for countries like Afghanistan. It ensures that all Members have an equal say and that the interests of the LDCs are taken into account.

As with the accession of the Republic of Liberia yesterday, the accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan comes at an important moment. Both accessions represent a vote of confidence in the WTO and the multilateral trading system. Together with the accession of Kazakhstan, they are the biggest highlights of the work of the WTO in 2015.

To the Government and people of Afghanistan I give a warm welcome to the WTO.

Thank you.