

STATEMENT BY H.E. EKWOW SPIO-GARBRAH, MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF GHANA AT THE ACCESSION CEREMONY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, NAIRO, KENYA, 16 DECEMBER 2015

MADAM CHAIR,

H.E ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA,

DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION,

CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL,

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana I wish to congratulate the Government and people of the Republic of Liberia for their Accession and extend a warm welcome to them to the World Trade Organization.

2. Liberia has come a long way having gone through years of war exacerbated by the devastation caused by the EBOLA Virus, and their Accession today demonstrates their commitment to the rule-based World Trade Organization whose pre-eminence as a forum for multilateral trade negotiations through which poor and vulnerable countries can truly benefit from international trade, cannot be down played.

3. This is evident in the personal participation in this ceremony by the President H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, whose presence has added touch and colour to this occasion.

4. The economic and trade policy reforms undertaken by Liberia, alongside the streamlining of the legal and regulatory frameworks during negotiations, have by no small means strengthened the resilience of the Liberian economy.

5. Just about eight years after the establishment of a Working Party to examine the application of Liberia to accede to the WTO, Liberia's Accession could be one of the fastest in the history of the WTO – the Working Party having met on four occasions since their first meeting in July 2012.

6. The process of accession to the organization as spelt out in Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement, the accord which established the WTO, has not been easy for Liberia, after agreeing to the WTO terms of membership in 2007.

7. The tough negotiations with interested Working Party members on concessions and commitments on market access for goods and services may have stretched thinly the capacities and resources of the country as LDC coming from a long period of devastation.

Madam Chair,

8. This feat could not have been possible without the cooperation of Members of the Working Party under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Joakim Reiter (former Ambassador of Sweden and now Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD), and the hard work of H.E. Axel Addy, Minister for Commerce and Industry and his team of negotiators. I wish to recognize and commend this effort.

9. It is Ghana's conviction that Liberia will be up to the task of meeting the demands of its "accession package", having shown resilience thus far and having developed a comprehensive Accession Implementation Plan to that effect.

10. As a sub-regional ally, Liberia can count on Ghana's support in this regard and at all times.

11. I call on the various Working Parties to hasten the process of accession of the 19 governments who are currently negotiating their WTO accession, and reiterate the call by ACP Ministers to accelerate the process for acceding African countries without imposing onerous concessions and commitments beyond their capacity and by extending technical support to them during this bidding process.

12. Once again, I congratulate the Government and people of the Republic of Liberia for coming this far.

Thank you for your kind attention.