



International
Trade
Centre

STATEMENT AT THE ACCESSION OF LIBERIA TO THE WTO

16 DECEMBER 2015

NAIROBI

ARANCHA GONZALEZ

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE

A traditional Liberian proverb says “To the patient man will come all the riches of the world”.

Today I say, “to the patient woman comes all the riches of the world”

As we welcome the Republic of Liberia to the WTO I want to pay tribute to a great woman, President Sirleaf. It is her vision of Liberia firmly anchored in the multilateral trading family, and her leadership to rally the country behind this initiative that made accession possible.

But behind every great woman there is a great man. It is the determination, patience and skills of Trade Minister Addy and the entire negotiating team that made accession happen.

It gives me a special sense of satisfaction that the ITC could contribute to Liberia’s efforts to seek WTO membership.

Over the last 4 years, ITC has supported the Government of Liberia to build a comprehensive approach and roadmap leading up to WTO membership. For Liberia, ensuring that the views of the private sector were reflected was a priority. Recognising that it is the thousands of SMEs in Liberia that will truly benefit from greater predictability and transparency which WTO rules offer and

the market access and capacity building opportunities, Liberia placed consultation with the private sector as a priority.

ITC collaborated with the Government of Liberia in redrafting its National Trade Policy to foster better coherence between Liberia's WTO commitments and its membership of the ECOWAS and we worked with the country in the drafting of its services and goods offers. We facilitated the participation of private sector representatives in meetings with international organizations in Geneva to enable them to appreciate the significance of WTO membership and we worked closely with Liberian stakeholders to ensure that their voice and priorities were heard.

The road to accession is now over. The focus now shifts to using WTO membership to help Liberia use trade as an engine for sustainable and inclusive growth. I am confident that the many WTO members who supported Liberia in their accession, starting with Sweden whose contribution through the *Kommerscollegium* was key - will now support Liberia to use trade to achieve the Global Goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

The International Trade Center will remain by your side. We intend to strengthen our partnership to increase the competitiveness of Liberian SMEs.

We will continue to support the operationalisation of your National Export Strategy in particular in areas such as tourism and furniture manufacturing.

Liberia and Liberians have shown their resilience. It is a country of strength and determination. ITC is honoured to be your partner in this new phase of your history.

Thank you