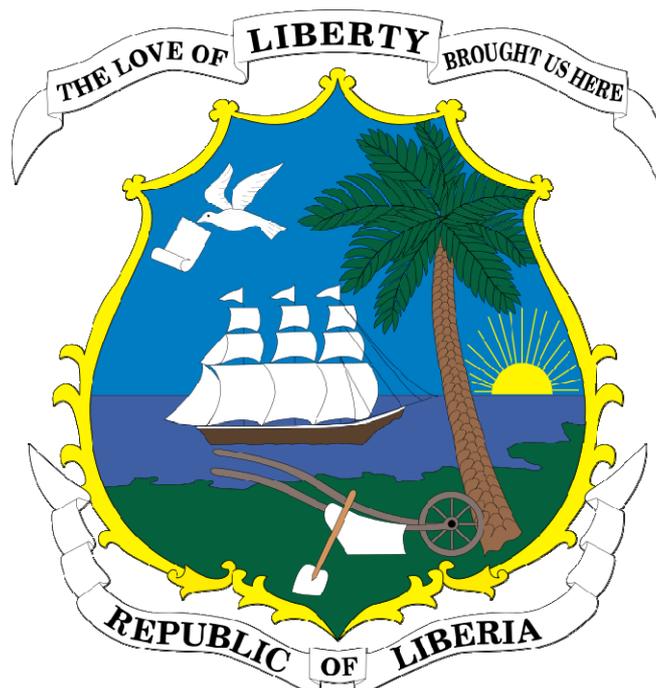

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)
10TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE



*Remarks by the President of the Republic of Liberia
H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf at signing of Accession Protocol of
Liberia Accession to the WTO at the
10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization*

Nairobi, 16 December 2015



1. Your Excellency, Uruhu Kenyatta, President of Kenya
2. Madam Chair of the 10th Ministerial Conference, Dr. Amina Mohammed
3. Mr. Director General, Roberto Azevedo
4. Ministers, Heads of Delegation, Distinguished Delegates
5. Ladies and Gentlemen,
6. Good afternoon. I am certain that your deliberations yesterday, the first day of this very important ministerial meeting were productive. As you and I know, every hour spent on these negotiations is critical to a successful outcome.
7. Madam Chair, Liberia's accession to the World Trade Organization today marks yet again another turning point in our history as we embark on a journey of economic transformation for inclusive growth. Although long and tough, the road to accession has come with milestones of economic growth with a GDP growth from 5.3% in 2005 to 8.7% in 2013.
8. Proudly, with over ten unbroken years of peace and stability, Liberia created the fiscal space by removing our external debt burden of \$4.9 billion dollars through the HIPC process. We increased domestic revenue from \$80 million to a peak of \$470 million in 2014, and mobilized substantial support to invest in trade facilitation infrastructure.
9. In the power sector, electricity on the national grid has increased from zero to 23 megawatts. Additionally, we are now completing various projects to add another 38 megawatts of power. These investments have facilitated expansion of electricity coverage from 5,000 households in 2005 to 32,000 households in 2015. We aim to reach a target of 54,000 households by 2017 across the country.
10. Additionally, the rehabilitation of our Mount Coffee Hydro plant is underway which, once completed, will further expand our power generation and distribution capacity to 88 megawatts. However, we know that this will not meet all of our needs. Consequently, we recently passed a new electricity bill that now allows private participation in this sector.
11. In the transport sector, we have also invested in expanding our road networks to improve access to markets for our producers. However, the high cost and severe climatic conditions have made this challenging. Nevertheless, my government have paved or rehabilitated nearly 698 kilometers of city, inter-county, and neighborhood roads, the highest by any administration in Liberia. By the end of 2017, the number of paved roads will be 960 kilometers; of which 220 kilometers will be newly paved roads.



12. We continue to solidify investments in improving our ports of entry and are aggressively pursuing new investment opportunities that will modernize our ports infrastructure.
13. In the social services sector, targeted investments have been made to provide better services for our people. As a result, we increased school enrolment to over 1.5 million in 2015, with girls' enrolment constituting nearly 50%. By 2017 we expect this number to increase to 2.6 million. We have trained some 10,000 teachers to support our ambition. While it is true Ebola exposed the fragility of the health sector, access to health services increased from 41% in 2007 to 71% in 2013, which was made possible through increase in health facilities from 354 in 2006 to 712 by 2012. We remain committed to rebuilding a more resilient health system.
14. The private sector, no doubt remains the engine of growth. We have put in place policies and procedures to ensure a more transparent and predictable business climate for equitable growth. Today is a testament to our commitment to domestic reforms to enhance our business climate for inclusive growth. We have placed special emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises to drive our agenda of inclusion. Notably, our legislature passed the Small Business Empowerment Act, which requires 25% public procurement for SMEs.
15. We recognize that despite progress over the last ten years, there is still more to be done. Admittedly, many of these achievements were severely impacted by a health crisis, which also crippled our economy and devastated the lives of so many of our citizens. Our economy also suffered another devastation with the dramatic drop in global prices of two of our major export commodities - rubber and iron ore. These two major challenges caused a significant drop in our GDP as critical sectors in our economy were negatively impacted. However, as a resilient people, with the support of the global community driven by acts of human kindness, we combated a virus that thrives on human kindness. Today we have the capacity to respond swiftly to contain this menace and have embarked on rebuilding a more resilient economy.
16. Today, as we join the WTO, we do so with the conviction that membership and participation in the multilateral trading system will yield new opportunities to foster our transformation agenda. We embrace the underlying principles of the system, rooted in the rule of law, fairness, transparency, mutual respect, with mutual benefits for all.
17. In so doing, we remain steadfast in our efforts to implement domestic reforms and modernize our systems and procedures. In our commitment to economic diversification, we have prioritized agriculture (cocoa, rice, fisheries and agro-processing) and tourism as sectors with high potential for jobs creation for our people.



18. Madam Chair, Liberia is endowed with over 40% of the tropical rain forest in West Africa, the largest in the region. Our country accounts for some of the most spectacular biodiversity in the world, including as a primary home to the pigmy hippo. It is ideal for eco-tourism.
19. With over 580 kilometers of beautiful white sand beaches along the Atlantic, Liberia tourism has benefitted from the dare devil surfers who dare to challenge some of the biggest waves in the world. Additionally, with so many beautiful lakes, lagoons, rivers and streams, coastal and marine tourism represent great opportunities for investments. We therefore welcome investors in these sectors while offering our assurances of the most favourable incentives for investment.
20. Liberia is also largely a country with a youthful population of over 60%, most of who are under age of 25, which also presents opportunities for manufacturing and ICT.
21. Madam Chair, we recognize that our transformation can neither be done alone, nor in isolation, but by forging partnerships based on the foundation of mutual respect with mutual benefits.
22. In closing, we salute our partners who have made this accession a resounding success and wish to assure all of you, that Liberia is open for business as a respectable partner. We also want to affirm that we fully subscribe to the common African position on strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system for the Africa we want; founded on principles of respectable, fair, and transparent global trade with mutual benefits for all.
23. Mr. President, Madam Chair, Distinguished delegates, I take the opportunity of this occasion to extend warm congratulations to the people of Afghanistan on their accession to be celebrated tomorrow.
24. I also would like to once again congratulate our host President Kenyatta and the people of Kenya and say how proud I am of their leadership in hosting MC10, the first in Africa. I also want to thank Director General Azevedo, Mr. Cheidu Osakwe and his team in the Accessions division for their support to our accession and in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the WTO. Equally so, I want to recognize and thank the Government of Sweden and particularly Ambassador Joakim Reiter for his leadership as the Chair of our Working Party over the years.
25. Finally, today would not have been realized without the talents of our Liberian technicians, public servants whose talents and commitment made today possible.
26. Madam Chair, let me assure you that Liberia intends to serve as an active member to foster trade as a tool for driving trade and investment for development and poverty reduction. We believe this organization has a critical role to play.



27. Let me wish you all a successful deliberation and I look forward to celebrating with all of you a positive Nairobi outcome that fosters fairer, more equitable trade for the prosperity of all of our peoples in a world we all want to live in.
28. *Asante Sana.*