



## REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

*Eleventh World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference  
Buenos Aires, Argentina*

### **Speech by Ambassador Yvette Stevens, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Sierra Leone Mission in Geneva**

Madame Chair,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of my country's Honorable Minister of Trade, Captain Momodu Allieu Pat-Sowe, who regrettably is unable to join us at this Conference.

Sierra Leone would like to thank the Government of Argentina for hosting this conference and for the warm hospitality accorded to all delegates. WE would also like to express our appreciation for the hardwork of the WTO Director General and his staff.

I would like to start by reaffirming the importance that Sierra Leone attaches to the provisions of the Doha Development Agenda. Meaningful outcomes on remaining DDA issues, including agriculture, cotton, special and differential treatment and fishery subsidies, are essential for positioning African nations to fulfill the structural transformation and continental integration priorities and objectives contained in our Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want. Outside the

context of the Doha Development Agenda, such issues will undoubtedly continue to be negotiated, but on terms that may no longer capture the development focus of the Doha mandate. This will result in a multilateral trading system that perpetuates inequities, particularly in agricultural trade.

I would like to emphasize that Sierra Leone does not believe that new issues, such as e-commerce, domestic regulation and investment facilitation are inconsequential but, the Doha Development Agenda still remains its priority, at this time.

The recent backlash against globalization highlights the need for more inclusivity in the global trading system. Trade remains an important tool for sustainable poverty reduction. This is acknowledged in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which have significantly raised the prominence of trade. Reference to trade policy and trade-related measures feature in at least six of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals; covering such areas as reforming distortions in world agricultural markets, the improvement of Aid for Trade, including increased funding for the Enhanced Integrated Framework for LDCs, special and differential treatment for developing countries, and most importantly, conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda.

Madame Chair  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Let us use the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as a springboard for change, the change that was called for when the Doha Development Agenda was launched back in 2001, just after the Millennium Development Goals were adopted. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda promises that “no one will be left behind.” But LDCs are far behind and will get even further behind, unless the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda are implemented.

Up until now, the global trade regime has fallen short of what is needed for Least Developed Countries in general, and Sierra Leone in particular, to use trade as an effective tool for sustainable development and poverty reduction. According to World Bank data, the number of poor Sierra Leoneans actually increased over the period since the Doha Development Agenda was adopted, and approximately half of the population still remain in poverty. I ask you this question – Would this have been the case if the Doha Development Agenda was effectively implemented?

Madame Chair,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me conclude by underscoring the importance of an issue very close to my heart - Gender equality.

Attainment of the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda will not be possible without achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 which calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Despite existing global, regional and national gender equality frameworks, poverty and marginalization continue to disproportionately affect women.

Gender-sensitive trade policies are crucial to securing productive opportunities and decent incomes for women. The important linkages between trade and gender must not be an afterthought, as is currently the case. Gender considerations must form an integral part of trade agreements and trade policy. The structural imbalances which contribute to an unequal distribution of the benefits from trade must be acknowledged and acted upon.

This is why Sierra Leone, in partnership with Iceland, has presented a Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment at this Ministerial Conference. This Declaration, which is non-binding, is aimed at collaboration to make trade and development policies more gender-responsive through sharing experiences, best practices and methods relating to gender sensitive trade policy

and analysis; working together in the WTO to remove barriers for women's economic empowerment and participation in trade; and ensuring that Aid for Trade supports the implementation of more gender-responsive trade policies. To support this collaboration, a series of seminars are planned, in coordination with relevant international organizations on a number of important themes related to trade and the economic empowerment of women.

I take this opportunity to invite you to join this partnership to empower women through trade.

I thank you.