

**11<sup>TH</sup> CHINA ROUND TABLE ON WTO ACCESSIONS**  
**"WTO ACCESSIONS AND TRADE INTEGRATION: STORIES FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC"**  
**RETROSPECTIVE OF 10 YEARS OF LAO PDR'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE WTO**

OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. MR. BOUNTHEUNG DOUANGSAVANH,  
VICE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

*1 February 2023 at 9:00 AM, Crown Plaza Hotel, Vientiane Lao PDR*

H.E. Kassahun Gofe Balami, State Minister of Trade Integration and Foreign Trade Promotion,  
Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration of Ethiopia;  
H.E. Ms. Amal Salid Saad Mohamed, Minister of Trade and Supply of Sudan;  
H.E. Mr. Joaquim Amaral, Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs of Timor-Leste;  
H.E. Mr. Seramaia Matai Nawalu, State Minister of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce of Vanuatu;  
H.E. Ambassador Li Chenggang, Permanent Representative of China to the WTO;  
Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director of Accessions Division, WTO  
Excellencies;  
Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

SABAIDEE and Good morning,

It is my great honour to be here, on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR, to express my warmest welcome to all distinguished delegates for your participation in the 11<sup>th</sup> China Round Table on WTO Accessions in Vientiane.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of People's Republic of China for this meaningful initiative to establish the "China Round Table on WTO Accessions". As a pillar of this Programme, the annual Accession Round Table has made important contribution to the accessions of Least developed countries. The Lao Government believes that this is an important programme, not only for the acceding LDCs, but also for the WTO to provide a great opportunity for LDC acceding governments to learn from the invaluable experiences of Article XII Members and LDC colleagues. In addition, the successful outcome of the Round Table would not only expand our knowledge on WTO accessions and the future of the Organization, but would also facilitate the remaining accessions for the LDCs.

I am sure many of you would recall that Lao PDR had the opportunity to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> China Round Table in October 2013, in Luang Prabang, the same year that we became WTO's member. The discussions were very intensive and productive with meaningful ideas, worthy of notes and reflection by the WTO Member. I strongly believe that there will be the same atmosphere and enthusiasm for this meeting.

Distinguished delegates,

The thematic focus of this year's Round Table is: "WTO Accessions and Trade Integration: Stories from the Asia-Pacific A Retrospective of 10 Years of Lao PDR's Membership in the WTO". We are very proud that we can inaugurate this important event together with the celebration of our 10<sup>th</sup> Years Anniversary of Lao PDR's Membership in the WTO.

Lao PDR's accession to the WTO marks a major step towards liberalizing trade, integrating Lao PDR into global economy and facilitating the ease to access global markets. 15 years of negotiating had been very complex and the overall long-term effects are positive. Lao PDR acknowledges that joining the WTO is not an end in itself; it is a tool to help a country to adjust its internal system to the best practices in the world trade community. At the same time, accession itself is not the end of a reform process but it is just the beginning. The true benefits will arise by taking the accession negotiations seriously and implements the obligations which have been agreed

accordingly. While most basic laws and regulations of Lao PDR are today in line with international obligations, it requires further efforts to implement them fully. Therefore, Lao Government was proud of our achievement in the accession process. However, we also realized the constraints especially for LDCs that are still facing limited expertise and financial constraints to effectively fulfil the commitment as a Membership in the post-accession period. For such reasons, further assistance from the WTO and its Members to build a supportive mechanism for providing regular support on post-accession issues to newly acceding Members, LDCs is highly crucial.

As you may be already aware, Lao PDR is a strong supporter of the rules-based multilateral trading system. Lao PDR is committed to the completion of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) mandate with the economic development of the WTO Members being central. Meanwhile, in recognizing the need to keep pace with the developments in the global economy, Lao PDR is a co-sponsored of the member-driven initiatives on the "new" issues namely Investment Facilitation for Development; Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); and E-Commerce.

Distinguished delegates,

We are now at the unprecedented and challenging moment for the functioning of international cooperation and the WTO, especially the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic, global economic slowdown and climate change. In order to prepare and overcome these challenges, we together need to work closely to support and restore the credibility of WTO and demonstrate that this organization is the core of multilateral legal framework and that multilateralism trading system can take part in solving the challenges. In this regard, the most significant aspect is that we send out a signal that the multilateralism system can come to consensus decisions on the pressing and urgent issues the world is now facing such as the need to reform in the WTO. Lao PDR reaffirms the importance it gives to an inclusive multilateral system for a smooth and fair function of the global economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude my remarks, let me extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of China and WTO Secretariat as well as the organizing committee of the Lao PDR for their hard work and excellent logistic arrangements to make this wonderful event happened, without them this Round Table would not have been possible.

Last but not least, distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen, I wish all delegates enjoy your stay in Vientiane and really hope this would not be your last visit to our small country but rich in culture and history with friendly people.

I wish this Round Table a great success and I declare that the 11<sup>th</sup> China Round Table is now officially opened.

Thank you.

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