

TRADE FOR PEACE THROUGH THE WTO ACCESSION PROCESS:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTH SUDAN”

Keynote Address by

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Representatives of the WTO Secretariat,

Excellencies, Ambassadors, and Heads of Missions accredited to the
World Trade Organisation (WTO),

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon!

I am humbled and feel greatly honoured to be given this opportunity to
speak to you today about this important topic of using WTO accession as
a tool for bringing peace to countries such as my own, South Sudan.

Trading takes place in the context of dialogue where offers are made,
bargained over, and transaction agreements reached to the benefit to all.
This scenario only happens in an atmosphere of peace, which for now I
will narrowly define as referring to the absence of conflict.

Notwithstanding the level of income inequality, trade allows everyone,
poor or rich, to create and accumulate wealth such that even the poorest
segments of our societies have something – a job, a business, a house, a

thriving and loving family, and indeed a harmonious society to preserve and protect from destructive wars.

Today too many lives and resources are wasted to fight destructive wars that perpetuate poverty. This is what has made some countries to be referred to as fragile or failing or failed states. This includes, the following countries, which have accepted to be identified as belonging to the club of fragile countries although they wish to exit it as quickly as possible. They are Somalia, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Yemen, Syria, Central African Republic, Timor Leste and of course my own country, South Sudan.

Whether you agree with any of the classifications and which country should or should not be in which list is not the point of my talk today. What I want to highlight and focus on is the fact that life should and can be made better in all of these countries, with a little bit of change in policy mindset. Conflict has become endemic to these countries not because their people think any differently, but rather because of the situation they find themselves in, at this very particular moment in time.

Unstable as they may be, I will argue that the rest of the world, and the WTO family in particular cannot afford to ignore and isolate countries like ours and expect us to make it on our own. As a matter of fact, accession to international organizations such as the WTO is what countries like mine need, to come out of the challenges we face today.

As we all know, the Bretton Woods Institutions that include WTO's predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank

were born out of the realization that PEACE IS THE RESULT and not the precondition for a stable world order.

Nations at the time created these important institutions to provide the platform for negotiating common rules and facilitating adherence to these rules so as to promote economic growth as a foundation for social cohesiveness and political stability across the entire globe.

To their credit, I would say, by and large these institutions have done a commendable job in helping many parts of the world rebuild themselves from the ashes of war including Europe, which experienced the worst possible war-inflicted destruction humanity has ever witnessed as was the case with the Second World War.

And more importantly, it is the role of these institutions in promoting trade among nations that has contributed the most to economic prosperity, and by extension promoting social and political stability.

It is for this reason that I strongly believe that accession to the WTO is what countries like mine need today and not later. Endowed with many natural resources, including oil, various mineral resources, fertile land, ample rainfall (of 7-9 months a year), diverse fauna and flora, South Sudan is ready and keen to open up to trade with the rest of the world.

It is by opening up and unlocking its full economic potential that South Sudan will fulfill the ambitions and desires of its 12 million people, over 70 percent of whom is young, under the age of 35 years. Many of them were born, raised and educated in the diaspora where they have seen and are motivated by not what they see today in South Sudan, but what happens

all over the world through the internet, social media etc. Unlike the older generations, the youth are better educated and many of them possess skills that match today's business oriented and technology-driven communities around the world.

Our youth, like any other, are full of energy, which can be used positively or negatively. Currently government and humanitarian organizations constitute the main sources of employment in South Sudan. This is contrary to the practice in many of your countries in which the private sector plays the leading role in generating employment. With a weak private sector, South Sudan is currently experiencing high levels of unemployment, with the youth bearing most of the challenges. This trend has worsened in the last few years as the country descended into a civil war.

Accordingly, the proportion of people falling below the poverty line has been increasing in the last few years. This to us is a source of concern that needs to be addressed head-on.

With the recent signing of the Re-vitalized Peace Agreement, stability is returning to South Sudan, but this needs to be consolidated with strong economic recovery as well as sustained economic growth in the coming years. This is the only way we can avoid future relapses to conflict.

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

South Sudan needs to incentive peace. The effective way to do that is to create job opportunities for the South Sudanese youth so that they do not

see value in joining rebel groups that wage destructive wars against their country.

It is on this ground that we look up to acceding to the WTO. As mentioned earlier, South Sudan is blessed with many natural resources, which remain mostly untapped due to many years of instability and conflict, but also lack of clear rules, predictability and transparency, that investors attach great importance to.

Joining the EAC and now seeking membership in the WTO is our way of telling the world that we are committed to undertaking necessary reforms that will allow us to attract foreign direct investment into the various sectors of the economy.

We believe membership in the WTO will give us the opportunity to create a new virtuous cycle i.e. increasing inflow of investment will jumpstart and increase productivity across all sectors of the economy. This way South Sudan can trade more and its economy set to grow, guaranteeing its citizens high productivity jobs that can allow them to accumulate wealth and rid themselves of poverty. It is only then that South Sudanese will constructively contribute to the development of our country without resorting to armed confrontations.

Before I continue Allow me to also commend WTO members for the recent admissions of Liberia and Afghanistan, two countries that we strongly identify and relate with given their experiences as post-conflicts and in many ways equally considered as fragile states. Their membership has given us great confidence in the commitment of members to maintaining

the WTO as a rules-based organization, which we look forward to learning a lot from.

We are particularly pleased to have the support and confidence of members in appointing Afghanistan as our Working Party Chair. We cannot think of a better chair than Afghanistan, which not only share the same challenges that we face, but also has fresh memories of the accession process.

Thank you very much for listening!