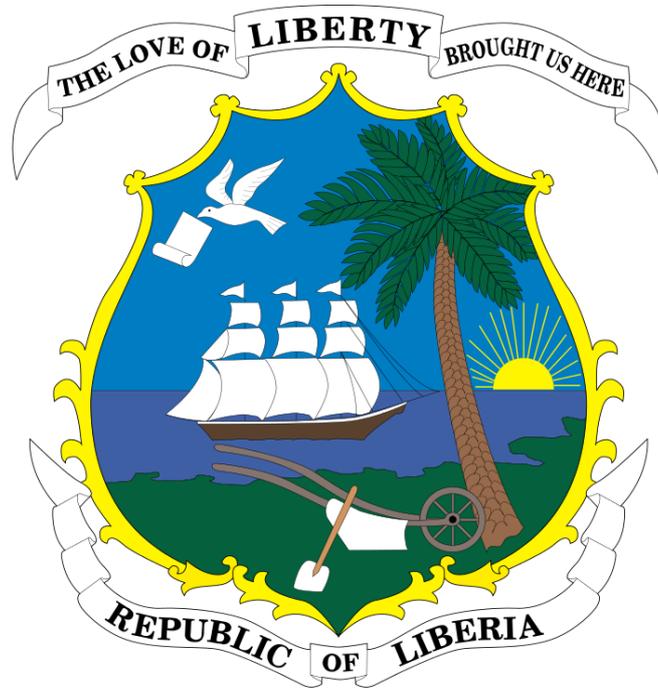


---

# ECOWAS Ministerial Meeting



**Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia**

**Welcome Remarks  
Honorable Steve Marvie  
Deputy Minister for Commerce & Trade  
Thursday, December 7, 2016  
Lome, *Togo***

---



Honourable Trade Minister of Togo, Our Host;

Honorable Trade Ministers;

Honorable Chaibou, Commissioner of Trade, ECOWAS Commission;

Representatives of UEOMA and Partner Organisations;

Mr. Chairman;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. Good morning Honourable Ministers, Honorable Chaibou, Commissioner of Trade, ECOWAS Commission, experts, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.
2. On behalf of the President, The Government, the People of The Republic of Liberia and on my own behalf, I am pleased to be here to represent the Honorable Minister of Commerce & Industry, Honorable Axel M. Addy, who extends his felicitations to the trade community and best wishes in the deliberations at this Ministerial. I am glad for the warm reception given by the Government and People of Togo.
3. I also wish to thank the experts for their wonderful deliberations over the past two days. Thanks to the ECOWAS Commission as well as the development partners, especially the GIZ, for the concerted efforts in organizing this meeting and putting together the high quality presentations.
4. I am encouraged by the significant role ECOWAS continues to play in setting the agenda for the Continental Free Trade Area as well as the discussions on the European Economic Partnership Agreement. ECOWAS continues to play a very critical role in promoting intra-regional trade and contributing to the improvement of the trade governance environment in the region.
5. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased that the experts meeting was able to discuss the progress on the EPA and the impact of the ratification of the interim EPAs, a competitive observatory framework and the WTO tariff renegotiations for member states, the CFTA Negotiations, as well as US initiatives to ECOWAS Member States through the Trade Africa, Power Africa, West Africa Trade Hub and Millennium Challenge Support, and awareness-raising for the 8<sup>th</sup> ECOWAS Trade Fair.
6. We note the interest of opening Free Trade Negotiations with the region by other trading partners, such as People's Republic of China, Turkey and Indonesia and India. We need to consider the sequencing of these negotiations given our capacity and current tasks of



negotiating the CTFA and EPA. We must also note the impact of BREXIT and should prepare for trade negotiations in this regard.

7. It is very important as a trade community that we meet annually to take stock and pulsecheck the trade protocols, trade transactions, and trade developments.
8. There remain some challenges we need to tackle in order to facilitate effective regional trade. There remains the challenge of non-tariff barrier within our borders. We need to facilitate trade for traders, especially women traders.
9. Colleague Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope that the deliberations over the past two days presented a thorough understanding of trade policy within the ECOWAS region and I would like to welcome you to this Ministerial meeting.
10. Finally, on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia, I am pleased to participate in this meeting.
11. I thank you all for your kind attention.