
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA



**9th Ministerial Conference of WTO
Bali, Indonesia
December 4, 2013**

**Statement by Liberia at the Ninth WTO
Ministerial Conference,
EIF Ministerial Breakfast**

**H.E. Axel M. Addy
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

“Liberia’s Experience of Leveraging Partnerships Through the EIF Process”

Excellencies,
Mr. Director General Roberto Azevedo,
Mr. Executive Director, Dr Ratnakar Adhikari,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would like to begin by thanking the organizers for the opportunity to speak at this Ministerial Breakfast Meeting and to discuss the agenda for EIF post-2015.

--

For the past six years, Liberia has been working with the EIF. As an LDC, this relationship is an important stream for the delivery of aid for trade. We in Liberia are still heavily dependent on imports, and our exports remain driven by natural resources. However, we have set ambitious targets for growing the domestic private sector to compete regionally and internationally, and to foster export-oriented growth. This can only be achieved with the Government empowering local entrepreneurs through establishing a more transparent and predictable business climate. In order to achieve this, we recognize our capacity gaps. What we ask from our donor partners is to help us meet these goals by continuing to offer targeted assistance in aid-for-trade. It is only with this collaborative approach that we can leverage partnerships to create inclusive export-driven growth.

Liberia’s experience with the EIF so far

In 2007, Liberia submitted an application for membership to the IF followed by technical review for approval. The proposal was approved in November 2009 and the IF/National Implementation Unit (NIU) Liberia began its operations.

As a result, Liberia produced its Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS) in 2007. The DTIS came about after a consultative process that brought together Liberia’s trade community. The DTIS also informed the formulation of Liberia’s 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy, also known as “*Lift Liberia.*”

--

The EIF facilitated the establishment of a WTO Reference Center at the Ministry of Commerce and setup a resource center for trade related activities at the Liberia Chamber of Commerce.

--

The EIF/NIU supported the private sector by conducting a National Trade Fair in September 2011. The trade fair brought small businesses together to showcase their products and establish a ‘Made in Liberia Trade Store.’

--

Amid these successes, EIF Liberia had its challenges too. The EIF was previously detached from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry complicating the process of knowledge sharing and collaborative work. Maintaining the EIF staff became a challenge, as many sought greener pastures away from the public sector. This damaged institutional memory and hindered long-term projects.

--

How We Plan To Restructure

The EIF/NIU will complete its Tier 1 Phase 1 programs on December 31, 2013 and is working on a proposal for a two-year extension of its Tier 1 Phase 2 programs. An updated DTIS is being finalized with the aim of including more information on trade opportunities that could be funded through aid-for-trade mechanisms.

--

In the phase 2 proposal we have made several changes to the original structure by putting in place a Single Project Implementation Unit (SPIU). This SPIU is a core part of the three-year strategic plan the Ministry has pillared as its roadmap. The overarching goal of the Single Project implementation Unit is to broaden the mandate of the MoCI-sanctioned and EIF-funded NIU to an umbrella unit with the aim of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the activities of the various MoCI donor-funded projects. The M&E framework we envisage is a results-based one with a clear focus of delivering on projects and programs in the SPIU. We expect that this approach will help us leverage new assistance in aid for trade by building on the considerable capacity of our domestic EIF/NIU staff.

--

The SPIU started as a unit comprising the EIF and two seconded Government civil servants. The unit was embedded in the Ministry to build capacity and to fully integrate within the Ministry’s structure. Today, other donors have also been attracted to our new SPIU model creating a vibrant center of excellence within the Ministry. The African Development Bank and the Ministry have put in place a project called Program of Assistance to Trade Support Institutions in Liberia (PATASIL). PATASIL will be integrated within the SPIU. Likewise, SIDA is funding the Swedish

National Board of Trade to assist Liberia in our accession to the WTO. Today, two Swedish National Board of Trade long-term advisors are assigned full time in the WTO Unit, which is also embedded in the SPIU. The unit is vibrant and an integral part of our Ministry ensuring transfer of knowledge and sustainability of the objectives of the EIF.

Amongst other things, the SPIU is mandated to:

- Monitor and evaluate all project related activities;
- Coordinate with Project Managers for the successful implementation of donor-funded projects;
- Manage the fiduciary responsibilities of several donor-funded projects.

Through the SPIU and its transformed staffing regime, the Ministry intends to leverage the capacity obtained under the EIF and other donor-funded projects. This will create new partnerships and better coordinated assistance to Liberia.

Before I finish, let me reiterate the essential role that donors play in helping LDCs in fostering private-sector development. Initiatives like the EIF/NIU are at the cutting edge of this development. However, all of these goals are only achievable if we work together to innovate and learn from our errors. In Liberia our new approach is already bearing fruit, but we must do more. It is only through this collaborative approach that we will build a rich partnership fostering a prosperous private-sector.

Thanks You.
