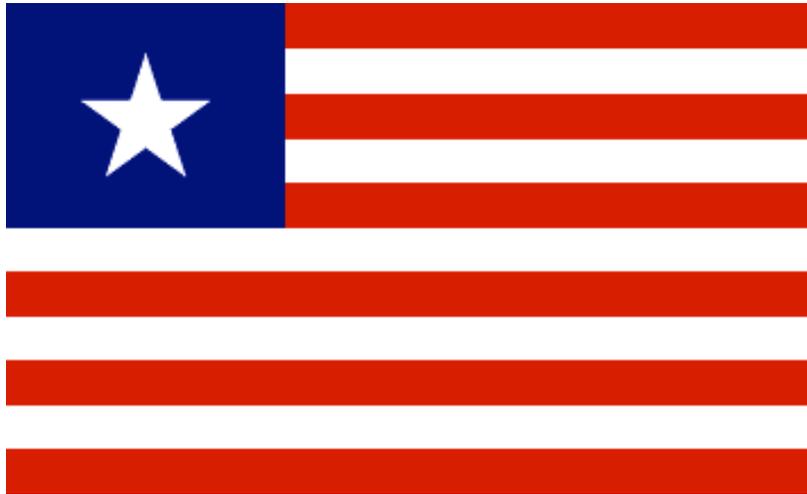

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA



UNCTAD Empowerment Program

Monrovia, Liberia

March 22, 2017

Opening Remarks

UNCTAD Empowerment Program for the National Trade Facilitation Committee

H.E. Stephen T. Marvie, Jr.

DEPUTY MINISTER FOR COMMERCE & TRADE SERVICES

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Salutation

Mr. Francis A. Dennis, Jr. – President, Liberia Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Bismark Sitorus, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD

Government Officials

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Introduction

I am honored that you have asked me to deliver the opening remarks for Module 1 Empowerment Program for the National Trade Facilitation Committee. My remarks will not be long. The main purpose of this workshop is to build the capacity of the NTFC and provide international standards and recommendations for our NTFC. We will also use this workshop to rank the priority measures in the Action Plan emanating out of the recently documented Trade Facilitation Agreement Assessment Report – a report that was done by the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

2. WTO and the TFA

Trade rule-making which is the WTO's core business is so important for commerce. Of even greater importance is the mechanism to facilitate trade. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement is an important agreement for global trade community. It is now into force since 22 February 2017 (following ratification by two-thirds of the WTO membership) and will assist WTO Members to ensure that rules of trade, though not very perfect, but remain important to prevent the “law of the jungle” from prevailing in international trade relations.

In Liberia, we are all exhausted with bureaucratic delays and sometimes “red-tape” which pose a burden for moving goods across borders for traders. That is why we welcome the national initiative to introduce a single window platform to integrate trade processes and procedures in a more transparent, predictable and clear way. We need trade facilitation to be simpler, modernized and harmonized to for export and import processes.

3. Benefits of the TFA

Estimates show that a full implementation of the TFA could reduce trade costs by an average of 14.3% and boost global trade by up to \$1 trillion per year, with the biggest gains in the poorest countries. Importantly, implementation of the TFA is linked to the capacity of the country to do so. Liberia has concluded an assessment of the TFA in terms of its capacity. We would like to take advantage of the TFA Facility, which is meant to assist developing and least-developed countries in implementing the TFA. We are aware that our commitments must be categorized in categories A, B or C and have done so in the assessment report. It is important to indicate that the LRA and MoCI have demonstrated some commitments in terms of meeting these notifications but we must ensure that the commitments are implemented across other MACs.

It is that desire that has continuously driven us to strengthen the capacity for the NTFC and broaden our commitment to ratify the TFA as soon as possible.

I wish you a productive workshop and hope to continue with this rich partnership between UNCTAD and Liberia.

Thanks.
