



MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ODONGO HOLDS BILATERAL MEETING WITH DR. NGOZI IKONJO – IWEALA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

On the sidelines of the 60th Anniversary Commemoration of UNCTAD, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Odongo Jeje Abubakhar held a bilateral meeting on June 12th with Dr Ngozi Ikonjo-Iweala Director-General of the World Trade Organization at the WTO Headquarters in Geneva. Hon. Odongo was accompanied to the meeting by the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the UN in Geneva, Amb. Marcel Tibaleka and officials of the Mission.

Hon. Odongo thanked Dr Ngozi for the meeting and congratulated her upon the recent conclusion of the 13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi. Minister Odongo said that enhancing the development dimension of trade is a priority for Uganda, and welcomed the fact that the Abu Dhabi Ministerial Declaration reiterated the centrality of the development dimension in the work of the WTO, recognizing that the full integration of developing countries in the multilateral trading system is important for their economic development. “We are grateful for your personal efforts to move this conversation forward at the WTO and confident that progress on this file will send a strong message to the world about WTO’s role in meeting the development aspirations of the global south,” he added.

Hon. Odongo informed Dr. Ngozi that as a land linked LDC, Uganda sees great potential in intra-African trade offering greater scope to support economic diversification and export stabilization, considering that the EAC has a market of 300 million people, COMESA 640 million and the AfCFTA about 1.4 billion. Inquiring about opportunities for WTO to support the The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Hon. Odongo said that Uganda believes it presents one of the greatest opportunities for impactful technical cooperation with Africa, and asked what more the WTO could do to support the AfCFTA and regional economic integration in general.

On her part, Dr. Ngozi emphasized the importance of diversifying the economy to make the AfCFTA work better because trade within the continent is just 15% and external trade is just 3%. She noted that Uganda was on the road to start producing fossil fuels, but said there were

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also opportunities in renewable energy such as green hydrogen to help diversify the economy and boost growth, which she noted is projected to grow at a rate of 6% for the next three years, double the world average of 3%.

Dr. Ngozi said the WTO was willing to offer support to Uganda in the implementation of the AfCFTA protocols and in bringing down barriers to trade through the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Uganda has over the years benefited from support from the WTO, including Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) funding support for projects to build the institutional capacity for trade and training/capacity building for government officials. Hon. Odongo said that Uganda would be keen to see the smooth continuation of the Aid for Trade and EIF programmes with enhanced resources. **END**

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