

**Opening Statement by the Secretary-General of D-8
Organization for Economic Cooperation , Ambassador Isiaka
Abdulqadir Imam, at the Technical Meeting on the
Implementation of D-8 PTA, Virtually hosted by the D-8
Secretariat on
5 December, 2022.**

***Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I feel greatly delighted to warmly welcome you all to this Technical Meeting on preparation for the takeoff of the implementation of the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

I want to use this opportunity to thank you all for your participation at this very important meeting.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to the Governments of the D-8 Member States and particularly their concerned Ministries and Authorities for their tremendous contributions during the process of formulation and implementation of the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which started as far back as 2006. It is my utmost desire that today's discussion on the pending matters of PTA

implementation will further ginger our collective efforts to implement the PTA.

My appreciation also goes to the Government of Malaysia and my colleagues at the Secretariat for coming up with this laudable initiative and for working tirelessly to ensure that this Meeting holds, after two postponements.

Distinguished Delegates,

As you are all aware, through our collective efforts at the organization, we have achieved significant advancement concerning the PTA implementation. Apart from three of our Member States that have acceded to the full implementation of the PTA, namely- Türkiye, Iran, and Malaysia, just recently Bangladesh and Indonesia have also completed their necessary domestic procedures and published the gazette notifications for their respective full implementation.

I therefore wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the fully implementing member states. Therefore, I want to use this opportunity to appeal to the Government of Pakistan and Nigeria to also expedite the process of implementation procedures in their countries. Let me also thank the Government of Egypt for reaffirming that their ratification process would soon be completed.

***Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Permit me to recall that during the 3rd Customs Officials Meeting held on 24th May 2022, the contracting Member States agreed on 31 August 2022 as cut-off date to complete all necessary internal procedures, such as publish gazette notification, update specimen customs stamps and signatures for issuing D-8 Certificate of Origin, etc. Subsequently, we also agreed at the

meeting that 31 October 2022 should be the kick off date for full operationalization of the PTA agreement in our respective member states. However, sadly this would no longer be feasible as some of our Member States could not meet up with some of the procedures as stipulated in the deadline.

Therefore, keeping the progress we have achieved in mind, I would like to stress that it is important for us today at this meeting to discuss all the pending matters outlined in today's agenda. We need to take definite decisions that would help in kick starting the operationalization of the PTA Agreement, without further delay.

***Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Permit me to say that on my assumption of duty in January this year, we have prioritized working on increasing our engagements with UN Bodies, other Development Partners and

Private Sectors in our member states, in order to enhance trade and investments and increase visibility of our organization.

To this end, the Secretariat is collaborating with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD to organize tailor-made training programmes that would enhance the capacity of the relevant Customs Officials in our member states, who are directly linked with the implementation of the D-8 PTA. In line with this, we had earlier requested member states to submit specific areas relating to the PTA, where our partner, the WTO, could provide necessary technical assistance to enhance the capacity of relevant officials of our member countries in order to ensure smooth implementation of the PTA. Unfortunately, we are yet to receive any input from the Member States. We would also immensely appreciate it, if the Member States could provide us with their inputs, at the earliest, to enable the Secretariat to formulate proposal to the WTO.

In the same vein, the D-8 Secretariat is also closely liaising with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to collaborate on capacity-building programme for our Customs officials so that we can fully utilize the D-8 PTA, when it becomes fully operational. The Secretariat would also appreciate inputs and suggestions and contributions from all esteemed Member States, in this regard.

Distinguished Delegates,

Finally, I wish to state that if we want to achieve the lofty goal of increasing intra-trade relations amongst or members states, as envisioned by our leaders in the Decennial Roadmap 2020-2030, there is no alternative to operationalizing the PTA Agreement, at the earliest. We are very close to it; let us make it happen from the beginning of next year, God Willing.

On our part, the Secretariat is ready to partner with the D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry (D-8 CCI) and other relevant Authorities in the member states to ensure that adequate sensitization programmes are carried out across member states to enlighten stakeholders, including SMEs, about the PTA and the potential opportunities that exists in this lofty Agreement. This exercise is very necessary if we are to ensure the successful operationalization of the PTA.

I wish you all successful deliberation in today's meeting and thank you all for your kind attention.