



Keynote Speech

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World Bank Fragility forum 2022

Trade for peace: addressing fragility through economic integration

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Virtual

Hon. Mawine G. Diggs, Minister of Commerce & Industry of Liberia

Excellency Amin Salam, Minister of Economy and Trade, Lebanese Republic

Mr. Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization

Ms. Maryan Hassan, Co-finder of Law and International Development Society

Greetings from g7+ headquarters, Dili, Timor-Leste

First of all let me thank the organizer for inviting me to such an important event to share the perspective of the g7+; the group of countries that have gone and are still going through hardships caused by wars and conflicts. Therefore, PEACE, and anything that supports it, is very close to our heart. While the more fortunate nations

of the world may take it for granted, **WE** the people of g7+ countries know how valuable PEACE has been; because most of us have lived and still live **without it**.

At the outset, I would like to express my deepest regrets over what is happening in Ukraine. Our hearts go to the innocent people who suffer due to this war. We empathize with the families who lose their loved ones to this crisis. As I have said in our statement that we issued last week, we condemn the invasion of Ukraine. We can feel the pain the people of Ukraine go through; because we have experienced the agony caused by aggression, invasion and civil wars!

We are worried by the growing hostility among the big powers since the start of this war. Instead of being reconciliatory in their conduct, they have adapted more antagonistic approach. Instead of pursuing diplomacy to end this conflict, they are pouring in weapons into this war.

Following their motives, the leaders of imperial powers see this crisis as a means to **contest their strategic and hegemonic interest**. Weapon producing corporations see this war as a way to augment their profit. Oil producing companies will profit from increasing oil prices that is imminent.

And it is the people, the innocent citizens everywhere who will bear the ultimate cost in the form of bloodshed, displacement, and poverty.

Therefore, **In the name of humanity, we ask Russia to stop this war and respect sovereignty of Ukraine**. We make an appeal to the European Unions, the NATO and the US to find peaceful ways to resolve this conflict. We remind all of them that

Ukraine and its people have the right as every other nation to choose to live in peace and dignity.

We warn, that the risks of “miscalculation” is very high it would lead the world to a “Mutually Assured Destruction”; an outcome that no human with a right mind would want.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen!

Trade is supposed to pacify the world.

HOWEVER!

The world is becoming increasingly multipolar **while** trade was supposed to unify it. Inequality among nations is EVER increasing while multilateral trade promises shared prosperity. The fear of conflicts has ever been high **while** trade was supposed to increase the opportunity cost for wars. Mighty countries are pursuing “TRADE WAR”;; **whereas** trade was supposed to be alternative to War. Countries are increasingly becoming antagonist against each other **while** trade is a means to strengthens relation among nations.

The rivalry affairs among mighty powers have had negative consequences for fragile countries. We are the first to feel that impact just like during the Cold war. Our countries become a battlefield for their competition. They play us and our people

against one another so that our survival continue depending on our allegiance to one or the other. They compete among themselves for resources that belong to us.

Our countries are too vulnerable to bear the negative consequences of adversarial trade policies. We have already experienced enough of suffering.

On average the world has been more peaceful since the 2nd world war. Economically and socially, It has developed manifold. Life standard on average has gone high for people in developed countries.

But WE, entire generations of people in "FRAGILE" countries have lived and are living our lives in crises, poverty and fragility. Look at Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Central African Republic; just to mention few in the G7+ group so that you can imagine what I am talking about. Nature has blessed us with resources that are enough to ensure our development, BUT we are homes to the world's poorest.

WHY?

We are in wars because our countries have been battleground for imperial powers who wrestle for hegemony!

We are in crisis because weapons keep flowing into our territories.

We are fragile, **NOT** because fragility is our character. But aggressions, civil and proxy wars have made us fragile.

We are rich by nature, but our resources have been exploited by multi-national corporations.

We are poor because we don't have fair access to multi-lateral trade. We have simply been passive recipients of policies, rules and regulations that have limited our potential.

This needs to be fixed!

And I would like to conclude by offering our perspective on how to fix it

First: The global and regional powers **must be stopped from creating, fueling, and funding wars in other countries.** They must resort to peaceful means and reconcile their differences through diplomacy. Their direct and indirect oppression of poor countries create hatred among people. As the historian Yuval Noah Harari says and I quote, **"Hatred is the ugliest of emotions. But for oppressed nations, hatred is a hidden treasure. Buried deep in the heart, it can sustain resistance for generations."** End of quote.

The outbreak of the Covid-19, the refugee flow into Europe and the climate change are manifestation of the reminder that physical borders are vulnerable to contain a crisis from spilling over. And in this weapon-congested world, a crisis can be escalated to a dangerous point that can wipe out the humanity! **Therefore, we reiterate our call for ceasefire everywhere.** We all have just started to take the sigh of relief from the direct impact of COVID which has made us all too vulnerable to survive another crisis.

Second: If we really believe in the shared prosperity, we ask the developed countries to suppress their motives of economic and political dominance over developing and poor countries. They have to adapt a notion of partnership founded on the principle of equality and mutual respect. We would support any reforms within the world trade system that can make it inclusive and fair. I, therefore, reiterate our commitment that g7+ can help in sharing our collective perspective on how to reform multilateral trade to that end.

Finally: The fragile and conflict affected countries are naturally rich enough to become self-reliant and stable if there is peace. Their young population is a potential that need to be harnessed through employment. And trade can bring employment if these countries are given fair share in the world trade system. Stability and peace in these countries is an assurance of stability and peace in the world.

May Peace and prosperity prevail everywhere.

I thank you for your attention.