



WTO Accessions Newsletter

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IGA-AGENDA:

The 5th meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place today, 26 May. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) the Mission to Kazakhstan by DDG Shark; (ii) vacant WP chairmanships; (iii) the status of LDCs' accession negotiations; (iv) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (v) Accession WPs under "maintenance"; (vi) Revision and Update of the "Templates" for the submission of Accession "Negotiating Inputs"; and, (vii) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2014 (annexed). WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark participated in Members' consideration of the first two items.

ACCESSION OF KAZAKHSTAN: MISSION TO ASTANA

WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark reported to IGA Members on the Mission to Astana, which took place from 21 to 23 May. The objectives of the mission had been to: (i) participate in the Astana Economic Forum (AEF); and, (ii) to meet with Government Authorities to take stock of the State-of-Play on the Accession of Kazakhstan. The programme included high-level meetings with H.E. Prime Minister Karim Massimov and H.E. Minister Aitzhanova. Kazakhstan reiterated its priority commitment to conclude its accession in 2014. It has mobilized political capital, energy and resources directed to advancing its accession. Two principal issues were key to progress and conclusion of this accession: (i) tariff adjustment and associated compensation; and, (ii) a factual update of the relevant substantive provisions in the imminent Eurasian Union Agreement (EUA) into the Draft Working Party Report of Kazakhstan (DWPR). The tariff adjustment exercise remained the most challenging. One of the principal objectives of the mission was to follow-up on the requests from Members, channelled through the Secretariat, for Kazakhstan and its Customs Union partners to submit, as early as possible, the Text of the EUA, which was required for updating the appropriate sections of the DWPR. Kazakhstan confirmed that the EUA Treaty text would be submitted, in June, in response to Secretariat request. A "Transparency Session" would be organized as part of the next cycle of meetings, to inform Members on the latest developments in the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. The Session would provide an opportunity for Q and A with Members. Astana was engaged with Members on other outstanding issues: SPS; Head Notes of the Draft Goods Schedule; and, the Draft Services Schedule. The Secretariat stood ready to continue to provide all appropriate support that Members and Kazakhstan might require. DDG Shark invited the support of Members for the Accession of Kazakhstan. DDG Shark was accompanied on the Mission by Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Secretary of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan.

VACANT WP CHAIRMANSHIPS

DDG Shark reported to IGA Members that two positions of WP Chairpersons were vacant: Bhutan and Belarus. The Chairman of the General Council had addressed a Fax Message to Members regarding the vacant chairmanships. Members had been invited to express their interest in these Chairmanships, if any, to DDG Shark. The deadline was 2 June. Thereafter, DDG Shark would hold consultations.

ACCESSIONS - TOOLBOX

- > Click here for a list of current [Accession Working Parties](#) and [Accession Working Party Chairpersons](#)
- > Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings (ECAM)
- > Secretariat Accessions Team
- > [WTO Director-General Annual Reports on Accessions](#)
- > Find all Article XII Members' specific accession commitments and related information provided in the Working Party Reports and Accession Protocols - in the [Accession Commitments Database \(ACDB\)](#)
- > [Handbook on Accessions to the WTO](#)
- > WTO Accessions Internship - "[China Programme](#)"
- > [Accession-Related Technical Assistance Activities](#)
- > For all official (de-restricted) documents relating to the accession processes of Article XII Members, click [here](#)
- > Accession Portal on the WTO Website ([En](#), [Fr](#), [Es](#))
- > All earlier [WTO Accessions Newsletters](#) are available on the Accession Portal of the WTO website, in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- > For enquiries related to the contents of the WTO Accessions Newsletter, send an e-mail to: Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting - 26 May 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)



Accession of Liberia - Technical Meetings with the Secretariat
and the WP Chairman, H.E. Mr Joakim Reiter - 7-8 May 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

2014 LDCs Accessions

The IGA was informed on the accession of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which remained an area of strategic priority for Director-General Azevêdo.

Yemen: Yemen had completed its domestic ratification process. Yemeni Trade Minister Talib would personally deposit with Director-General Azevêdo, the "Instrument of Acceptance" of Yemen's Protocol of Accession to the WTO, on 27 May. *De jure* membership would be effective 30 days after that date, from 26 June. Yemen would become the 160th WTO Member.

Liberia: Liberia had re-energized its accession. Liberian Government's priority was to advance its accession to maturity in 2015, within the Framework of the Revised Guidelines on LDCs' Accessions (WT/L/508/Add.1). On 5 May, Liberia's Chief Negotiator, Commerce and Industry Minister Axel Addy met with the Director-General Roberto Azevêdo to deliver a letter from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. In response to the letter, DG Azevêdo promised the President his full support and his close attention to Liberia's accession. The Secretariat, in coordination with Ambassador Reiter, the WP Chairman, had developed an "Evolving Roadmap" and would assist the Liberian Team with the re-start of its negotiations on the Bilateral and Multilateral tracks. A WTO Secretariat Team would travel to Monrovia in the second week of July to deliver technical assistance. Minister Axel Addy, Chief Negotiator for Liberia would be in Geneva for the July General Council and would be ready to meet WP Members, who so request, for bilateral meetings. The Secretariat paid tribute to China, the European Union (Swedish National Board of Trade) and the United States for significant technical assistance support to Liberia. The Executive Director of the International Trade Centre Arancha Gonzalez was commended for assistance provided by ITC. Other Members were invited by the Secretariat to provide accession-related technical assistance to support the WTO Accession of Liberia.

ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES (WP) IN FOCUS

Seychelles: This accession was advancing rapidly. A team of negotiators from Seychelles had been in Geneva from 1 to 5 May, to work with the Secretariat Team to update its Negotiating Inputs for the Working Party. The complete set of documents had been circulated on 12 May. The revised Draft Working Party Report contained 36 specific commitments, some of which were new (on consumer protection, IPRs, privatization, and competition policy). There was no longer any bracketed language. All WTO-relevant bills had been enacted into law by the Parliament of Seychelles. Remaining implementing regulations were being issued and promulgated, in line with the revised LAP. Bilateral negotiations were progressing well. On 2 April, Seychelles had submitted its draft ITA schedule. The Draft had been circulated to ITA Participants for their consideration. Some technical comments had been received. Following the incorporation of the technical comments and when approved, a Fax Message would be issued by the Chairman of the ITA Committee to ITA participants confirming the approval of Seychelles' ITA schedule. The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for the first week of July. A Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture would be convened on 2 July, and a formal WP Meeting on 3 July. Finance, Trade and Investment Minister Pierre Laporte would lead the Seychelles Delegation.

MAINTENANCE WORK

The Secretariat reported on the technical state-of-play on several active accessions:

Algeria: Negotiations were progressing, substantively, constructively and rapidly. The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for this year, depending on the timely submission of questions from Members and responses with associated inputs from Algeria. A plurilateral meeting on agriculture was envisaged, as part of the next Cycle of Meetings.

Azerbaijan: This accession was progressing. On 8 April, the Draft ITA Schedule of Azerbaijan had been circulated to ITA Participants for review. Technical comments had been received, to which Azerbaijan needed to respond. The Negotiating Team from Baku, led by Deputy-Minister

Mammad-Guliyev, would be in Geneva from 30 June to 4 July. Members interested in holding bilateral meetings were invited to contact the Azerbaijani Mission directly.

ACCESSION "NEGOTIATING INPUT" TEMPLATES / TECHNICAL NOTES

The WTO Secretariat had largely completed the comprehensive technical review of the templates of Questionnaires, Checklists and Information Notes used by Acceding Governments to submit negotiating inputs to Working Parties. The templates had been unified into one single document. The update had taken account of the evolution in WTO rules and accession-related practices over the last 20 years. The templates as revised and updated had been forwarded to Members, electronically, on 2 May, for their review, prior to formal circulation. These were, namely: WT/ACC/22 - Procedures for Negotiations under Article XII; WT/ACC/22/Add.1 - Agriculture - Information on Domestic Support and Export Subsidies in Agriculture; and, WT/ACC/22/Add.2 - Checklists and questionnaires on SPS, TBT, IPRs, and a draft subsidies notification. Comments had been received from one Member. The technical update had been completed. Members were invited to provide technical comments, if any, to the WTO Secretariat: accessions@wto.org. In light of the exchanges at today's IGA, it was agreed that the earlier deadline of end May would be extended to allow time for further comments by Members.

Technical work to update one Template remained "outstanding". This was for: "WT/ACC/5 - Information to be provided on Policy Measures Affecting Trade in Services - Technical Note by the Secretariat", which was being reviewed by the competent Division. As soon as its review had been completed, it would be forwarded to Members, for a 30-day review period, prior to formal circulation.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Accessions Division continued to provide accession-specific technical assistance and capacity building in coordination with ITTC. The International Trade Centre (ITC) had organized an "Accession-related Training" for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Sudan, on 12-16 May, in Geneva. In response to questions from Members in the IGA, the Secretariat explained that the substance of the ITC activity covered Accession Fundamentals (process, how, challenges and benefits) and also focused on the Foreign Trade Regime encompassing Internal Policies Affecting Foreign Trade in Goods; TRIPS; and, Policies Affecting Trade in Services.

The Outreach Cycle with WTO Regional Groups started with a briefing for the Informal Group of Developing Countries (IGDCs), 7 May. Briefings for WTO Regional Groups would continue after the Summer Break.



*Briefing on Accessions for the Informal Group on Developing Countries (IGDCs) - 7 May 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

The Secretariat reported on WTO E-Learning Courses. These courses remained one of the key modalities for technical assistance and capacity-building for Members and even more for Acceding Governments. Currently, 18 courses in English and 15 courses in French and Spanish were offered on specific WTO Agreements and covering a range of issues. There were specific courses on "Accession to the WTO". A course was also provided on "WTO Market Access Intelligence online". The number of participants from Observer countries had increased from 407 in 2012 to 759 in 2013 (constituting 9% and 14% of the overall number of participants, respectively). 54 participants had participated in the course on WTO Accession, so far, this year, between January and May, compared to 85 in total in 2013. 47 participants had attended the course on Market Access databases in 2013 compared to 84 participants, at this half-year stage, in 2014. Online registration to the courses was throughout the year, at: <http://etraining.wto.org>.

ANNEX

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)¹

| Date | Working Party | Meeting | Status | Room | Interpretation | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---|--|------|----------------|-----|
| | | | | | EN-FR-ES | Own |
| Monday, 26 May 2014 | IGA | 5 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions | Convening fax dated 19 May 2014 refers | S3 | NO | NO |
| [Thursday, 26 June 2014] | IGA | 6 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions | Convening Notice pending | S3 | NO | NO |
| [Wednesday, 2 July 2014] | Seychelles | Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (AM only) | Convening Notice pending | D | NO | NO |
| [Thursday, 3 July 2014] | Seychelles | 6 th Working Party Meeting (AM/PM) | Convening Notice pending | D | YES | NO |
| [Friday, 18 July 2014] | IGA | 7 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions | Convening Notice pending | S3 | NO | NO |
| [4 th Quarter 2014] | Liberia | 2 nd Working Party Meeting | Convening Notice pending | TBC | YES | NO |
| [TBC] | Afghanistan | 5 th Working Party meeting (AM/PM) | Convening Notice pending | TBC | YES | NO |

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to:

- Ms. Souda Tandara-Stenier (Tel: 022 739 6321; e-mail: Souda.Tandara-Stenier@wto.org);
- Ms. Nadia Ferdi Demierre (Tel: 022 739 6560; e-mail: Nadia.Ferdi@wto.org); or
- accessions@wto.org

¹ Dates are suggested to assist planning by Members, Acceding Governments and the Secretariat. However, listed meetings are not automatic and will only go ahead on the basis of inputs from Acceding Governments, received with sufficient time for review by Members, normally a period of at least four weeks.

Scheduling and confirmation of meetings also take account of the distribution of meetings in any particular period, and hence, the capacity of Members and the Secretariat alike to cope.