

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER



...safeguarding, enlarging and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system

WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Eighth Session of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) – 15 September 2015

Agenda:

- ✦ Progress Report on LDCs' Accessions in 2015 Focus: Liberia and Comoros
- ✦ Accession Working Parties under Maintenance: Belarus and The Bahamas
- ✦ Completed accessions: Kazakhstan
- ✦ Secretariat Note on Post-Accession Best Practices
- ✦ Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview

Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Director of the Accessions Division)

Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus

Least-Developed countries (LDCs)

Liberia: H.E. Ambassador Joakim Reiter, Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia, presented a progress report to IGA Members on the accession of Liberia. This accession was poised for completion at the Working Party level, in advance of MC10. Significant progress had been made since the July cycle of WP meetings. Following the 23 July WP Meeting, 6 Signatory Members had undertaken the verification of the Draft Schedules of Liberia on Goods and Services on 28 July, chaired by the Secretariat in accordance with practice. With the emergence of the Draft Accession Package, Chairman Reiter, accompanied by the Director Accessions, led a mission to Monrovia, Liberia, from 19 to 21 August, to meet with the Liberian Government. The purpose of the mission was to present the Draft Accession Package of Liberia to the Executive and Legislative branches of Government and stakeholders, and answer questions. Ambassador Reiter and the Director Accessions met with H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and the Vice President. They hand-delivered a letter from WTO Director-General Azevêdo in support of the WTO accession of Liberia and immediate Post-Accession support. A presentation was made to the Cabinet of Ministers, at a session over which President Johnson Sirleaf presided. Presentations were also made to the Senate and the House of Representatives followed by a Q and A Session. Following the Mission to Monrovia, the Secretariat finalized the Draft Accession Package and circulated it to all Members of the Working Party on 4 September. The Draft Package consisted of: (i) the updated Draft Report of the Working Party, (ii) the Draft Consolidated Goods Schedule of Liberia and, (iii) the Draft Consolidated Services Schedule of Liberia. Members had been given the standard 4 weeks for the review of the Draft Package. Ambassador Reiter informed the IGA that the 4th and final meeting of the Working Party was envisaged for 6 October. A formal airgram would be circulated by the Director-General to convene the meeting. At the meeting, Members would be invited to consider the Draft Accession Package of Liberia for adoption, *ad referendum*, and transmission for formal action to the December Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ambassador Reiter paid tribute to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for her strong commitment to domestic reforms and strong leadership which have brought the accession of Liberia to this final stage. The decisiveness and speed of Presidential decision-making in Monrovia was assisted by the technical ability and focus of Liberia's Chief Negotiator Minister Addy. On behalf of the Membership, Ambassador Reiter also paid tribute to Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for his strong engagement on this Least developed Country Accession of Liberia at particular critical moments of challenge for the Acceding Government. He thanked Members and the Government of Liberia for their active and constructive engagement and pragmatism which had allowed this accession to remain on pace for a 2015 conclusion. Members were asked to start early to give thought to post-accession Technical Assistance for Liberia.

Condolence

The IGA observed a minute of silence to honour the memory of Madame Laurence Dubois-Destrizais (France), Chairperson of the Working Party on the accession of Lebanon, who passed away on 29 August 2015. A Statement was made to recall her contributions to the rules-based Multilateral Trading System, including as Chairperson of the Accession Working Party.



Mission to Monrovia, Liberia, 19-21 August 2015
Meetings with H.E. Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,
President of Liberia

2015 Accessions Maintenance

Belarus: At the request of the Government of Belarus, the Secretariat (the Director Accessions and the WP Secretary) visited Minsk to hold meetings with senior government officials, on 11-12 September. Meetings were held with Foreign Minister Vladimir MAKEI; Chief Negotiator and Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Guryanov and the accession negotiating team. A meeting was also held with Mr. Anton Kudasov, Deputy Minister of Economy. The exchange of views focused on a range of questions revolving around the re-start of the accession negotiations of Belarus; efficiency considerations and optimal approaches for an expedited conclusion. There was a review of the substantive state-of-play. The latter included a review of the technical platform of the state-of-play in market access negotiations for goods and services and, rules in the framework of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) integration process, including and taking account of the membership terms of EAEU members already Members of the WTO. The self-evident was made by the Secretariat Team that, a meaningful re-start would necessarily reflect the Accession Protocols of the Russian Federation and the 2015 conclusion of the Accession Negotiations of Kazakhstan.

The Government of Belarus reaffirmed WTO membership as a strategic priority. It underlined its commitment to a serious re-start of its accession negotiations, in full speed gear, and, to conclude on an accelerated basis, as soon as possible.

It was noted that the Accession of Belarus would be fully on the radar screen of the work of Members in 2016. Members in the IGA would be kept fully updated in real time on upcoming developments on this accession. The IGA was informed that a report had been made to H.E. Ambassador Haluk Ilicak (Turkey), Chairman of the Working Party, who would report, periodically, to the IGA.

The Bahamas: The Secretariat had reviewed Nassau's latest Negotiating Inputs which included: (i) the updated draft Factual Summary, (ii) an updated Legislative Action Plan and, (iii) three pieces of legislation (Value Added Tax Act 2014; Value Added Tax Regulations 2014; and Protection of Revenue Order). The review process had revealed that more technical work was required by Nassau. The Secretariat would meet with H.E. Ambassador Rhoda Jackson (The Bahamas) and her team for a technical exchange and review of a checklist of issues, to take forward the necessary technical work.



Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, H.E. Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minsk, 11 September 2015
(http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f1133b5e97db06c6f.html)



President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Director-General Roberto Azevêdo sign the Protocol of Accession of Kazakhstan, 27 July 2015

Completed accessions

Kazakhstan: Following the formal adoption of the Accession Package by the General Council on 27 July, President Nazarbayev and Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had signed the Protocol of Accession. Kazakhstan was expected to ratify the Protocol in the coming weeks and deposit its "Instrument of Acceptance" with the Director General. The WTO Secretariat, led by DDG Shark, H.E. Mr. Vesa Himanen, Working Party Chairperson and, the WP Secretary would undertake a Mission to Astana to assist the Government of Kazakhstan in explaining the Accession Package to Parliament, during the ratification process. After 30 days from the deposit of the Instrument of Acceptance, Kazakhstan would become the 162th Member of the Organization. **Derestriction:** In accordance with the Decision of the General Council of 14 May 2002 on "Procedures for the Circulation and Derestriction of WTO Documents" (WT/L/452), the negotiating documents on the Accession of Kazakhstan to the WTO were derestricted on 7 September 2015. These documents were listed in document WT/ACC/KAZ/95.

LDCs accessions (cont'd)

Comoros: On 24 August 2015, Moroni submitted documentation to re-start the preparation for the first meeting of the Working Party, which is envisaged, tentatively, for mid-November this year. Inputs received from the authorities of Comoros included completed standard questionnaires on State Trading Enterprises, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, Customs Valuation, Import Licensing, Technical Barriers to Trade, and SPS. On 9 September, the Secretariat also received the amendments to the Budget Bill for 2014. A telephone conference call with the Comorian Chief Negotiator had taken place to review the state-of-play with Moroni and identify remaining gaps in submitted negotiating inputs.

Seventy-Fifth Session of the Sub-Committee on LDCs: On Friday, 18 September, the Accessions Division would report to the Sub-Committee on LDCs on the: (i) State-of-Play in the Accession Working Parties of LDCs; and (ii) Third China Round Table in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Secretariat Note on Post-Accession Best Practices

WTO Top Management attaches importance to post-accession support and implementation. Thirty-three accessions and their post accession experiences were cumulating and providing useful systemic lessons on how best to maximise the benefits of WTO membership, for Article XII Members from their immediate post-accession phase until their first TPR.

As follow-up to the 3rd China Round Table, Dushanbe, 2–4 June 2015, a post-accession questionnaire had been sent to Article XII Members on 16 July. To date, the Secretariat had received responses from 13 Article XII Members. The responses contained rich and valuable information on post-accession practices, which would help refine the Secretariat's work on post-accession best practices.

Based on a compilation of post-accession implementation and practices collected from the questionnaires, a Secretariat Note on Post-Accession Best Practices, providing the framework for post-accession implementation, would be circulated to Members, at the time of the circulation of the Director-General's 2015 Annual Report on Accessions.

Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview

- Preparations had been completed for the series of activities to mark the "WTO Twentieth Anniversary Accessions Programme". These activities would take place from 28 to 30 September. The 3-part Programme contained the: 2nd Global Seminar on Accessions; Special Session to mark the 10-year Anniversary of the WTO membership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to be led by H.E. Mr. Tawfig Fawzan Airabiah, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Saudi Arabia (on 29 September). Finally, the scheduled launch of the book on WTO Accessions by the WTO Director-General (on 30 September):

"WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty"

<http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/law/international-trade-law/wto-accessions-and-trade-multilateralism-case-studies-and-lessons-wto-twenty?format=HB>

- As part of the highlight of activities, a Special Session of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) at the HODs level, has been scheduled for a presentation to be made by H.E. Mr. Andrey Slepnev, Minister of Trade for the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) on the: **"Eurasian Economic Union: The First Year – Dynamic Transformation, Priorities and Challenges"**. This IGA Special Session is scheduled for 29 September (at 17.15 in Room E), at Heads-of-Delegation plus one, exclusively.

- The 4th China Round Table has been convened from 13 to 14 December 2015, in Nairobi, Kenya, back-to-back with MC10. Invitation letters have been despatched to selected participants, including from Acceding Governments, Article XII Members, and African LDCs. The theme of the Fourth China Round Table was: **Domestic Reforms for Competitiveness and Deeper Trade Integration in the Global Economy, with the focus on Africa**.

For enquiries, contact: Acc-events@wto.org

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
Tuesday, 15 September 2015	IGA	8 th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening fax dated 08/09/2015 refers	S2
[Tuesday, 6 October 2015]	Liberia	4 th and Final Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	D
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[3 rd Week of November 2015]	Comoros	1 st Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[4 th Quarter 2015]	The Bahamas	3 rd Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
28 September 2015	Second Global Seminar on Accessions			
29 September 2015	10 th Anniversary of the WTO Accession of Saudi Arabia			
30 September 2015	Launch of Accessions Book: WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons for the WTO at Twenty			
13-14 December 2015	Nairobi, Kenya 4 th China Round Table			

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to: accessions@wto.org

LIST OF WTO ACCESSIONS WORKING PARTY CHAIRPERSONS

No.	Government	Date Working Party established	WP Chairperson
1.	Afghanistan*	13 December 2004	H.E. Mr. Roderick <u>van Schreven</u> (Netherlands)
2.	Algeria	17 June 1987	H.E. Mr. Alberto Pedro <u>D'Alotto</u> (Argentina)
3.	Andorra	22 October 1997	Pending
4.	Azerbaijan	16 July 1997	H.E. Mr. Walter <u>Lewalter</u> (Germany)
5.	The Bahamas	18 July 2001	H.E. Mr. Wayne <u>McCook</u> (Jamaica)
6.	Belarus	27 October 1993	H.E. Mr. Haluk <u>Ilıcak</u> (Turkey)
7.	Bhutan*	6 October 1999	H.E. Mr. Thomas <u>Hajnoczi</u> (Austria)
8.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	15 July 1999	H.E. Dr. István <u>Major</u> (Hungary)
9.	Comoros, Union of the*	9 October 2007	H.E. Mr. Luis Enrique <u>Chávez Basagoitia</u> (Peru)
10.	Equatorial Guinea*	5 February 2008	Pending
11.	Ethiopia*	10 February 2002	H.E. Dr. Steffen <u>Smidt</u> (Denmark)
12.	Iran	26 May 2005	Pending
13.	Iraq	13 December 2004	H.E. Mr. Omar <u>Hilale</u> (Morocco)
14.	Lebanese Republic	14 April 1999	Pending
15.	Liberia*	18 December 2007	Mr. Joakim <u>Reiter</u> (Sweden/Deputy-Secretary General UNCTAD)
16.	Libya	27 July 2004	Mr. Victor <u>Echevarría Ugarte</u> (Spain)
17.	Sao Tomé and Príncipe*	26 May 2005	Pending
18.	Serbia	15 February 2005	H.E. Mrs. Marie-Claire <u>Swärd Capra</u> (Sweden)
19.	Sudan*	25 October 1994	Pending
20.	Syrian Arab Republic	4 May 2010	Pending
21.	Uzbekistan	21 December 1994	H.E. Mr. Seokyoung <u>Choi</u> (Korea)

* Least-developed country (LDC)

ACCESSIONS TOOLBOX

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- [✚ Accession Working Party Chairpersons](#)
- [✚ WTO Director-General's Annual Reports on Accessions](#)
- [✚ Handbook on Accessions to the WTO](#)
- [✚ Accession-Related Technical Assistance Activities](#)
- [✚ Accession Portal on the WTO Website \(En, Fr, Es\)](#)
- [✚ Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings \(ECAM\)](#)
- [✚ Accession Commitments Database \(ACDB\)](#)
- [✚ WTO Accessions Internship - "China Programme"](#)
- [✚ Accession processes of Article XII Members, click \[here\]\(#\)](#)
- [✚ WTO Accessions Newsletters](#)

✚ Contact the WTO Accessions Secretariat: Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org