

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

WTO Accessions Developments – Secretariat Report to Members

Accessions Strategic Objectives

- ⇒ Domestic reform instrument
- ⇒ Systemic update
- ⇒ Market access expansion
- ⇒ International cooperation for trade

THIRD INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS

Tuesday, 4 April 2017

Agenda:

- Strategic Focus for 2017:
 - ➔ Accession of the [Union of the Comoros](#): Report by Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Working Party Chairperson
 - ➔ Accession of [Lebanon](#): Report by Mr Jean-Paul Thuillier (France), Working Party Chairperson
 - ➔ Accession of [Sudan](#)
- Accession Working Parties State of Play: [Belarus](#) and [Azerbaijan](#)
- Technical Assistance and Outreach: [Fifth China Round Table on WTO Accessions](#); and, Training Course on [Goods Schedules](#) for WTO Accession
- Accession Anniversaries in April: [The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#), [Jordan](#), [Nepal](#), [Seychelles](#) and [Montenegro](#)

Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Maika Oshikawa, Officer in Charge of the Accessions Division).

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Accession of Comoros — Working Party Chairperson's visit in Moroni — 8-10 March 2017

Strategic Focus for 2017

Accession of the Union of the Comoros: Report by Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Working Party Chairperson



Meeting with Members of Parliament

Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of the Comoros, briefed IGA Members on his visit to Moroni on 8-10 March 2017. During his visit, the Chairperson held a series of meetings with the Government of Comoros, including with H.E. Mr Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros; Mr Mohamed Daoudou, Minister of Interior; Mr Said Ali Said Chayhane, Minister of Finance; Mr Mohamed Bacar Dossar, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and, Mr Hamadi Idaroussi, the Secretary General of the Government.

These meetings reaffirmed the high level commitment and engagement of the Comorian Government and its determination to finalize accession negotiations by MC11. To the Comorian authorities, WTO membership was central to the country's future socio-economic development.

Meetings with Dr. Charif Maoulana, the Deputy Speaker of parliament confirmed the readiness of the Comorian legislature to enact WTO-related legislation, starting at its next session in April. The legislation package would include, *inter alia*: (i) competition law; (ii) intellectual property, i.e. the ratification of the Bangui Agreement; (iii) codes on fisheries and agriculture; (iv) a revised SPS law; (v) trade remedy legislation; (vi) Codex Alimentarius; (vii) a law on economic zones; and (viii) a law on import and export licensing.

The Working Party Chairperson also met with the Chamber of Commerce of Industries and Agriculture of Comoros, including its president, Mr Ahmed Bazi and 20 representatives from different business sectors, who pledged their full support to the



Meeting with Chamber of Commerce

Government's efforts on WTO accession. For the business community, WTO membership was seen as an opportunity to improve Comoros' business environment, by integrating with global markets and adopting international practices and standards.

At a Roundtable with the National Committee on WTO Accession, the Working Party Chairperson engaged in a discussion with 35 domestic stakeholders directly involved in the accession process, on the technical state-of-play, the reasons for joining the WTO, and ongoing WTO developments. He also met with Mr Michel Bua, Resident Representative of the IMF, to discuss possible assistance from the Fund on the introduction of a value added tax which was a central component of the Comoros' reform agenda in order to streamline the current system of collecting multiple taxes at the border.

In parallel to these meetings, the Secretariat conducted a number of working sessions with the Comorian technical team to assist in the preparation of inputs for the next cycle of Working Party meetings.

Regarding next steps in the accession process, Comoros is currently finalizing the submission of revised inputs, including replies to Members' questions, a revised Legislative Action Plan, a revised TRIPS checklist and revised market access offers on goods and services. In parallel, the Secretariat is preparing the Factual Summary of Points Raised, in English, based on the revised inputs submitted by Comoros. Subject to timely circulation of all documentation, the next Working Party meeting will take place in May.

On bilateral market access negotiations, Comoros is planning to sign the first set of bilateral market access agreements on the margins of the next Working Party meeting.

Strategic Focus for 2017 (cont'd)

Accession of Lebanon: Report by Mr Jean-Paul Thuillier, Working Party Chairperson



Mr Jean-Paul Thuillier (France), Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Lebanon, briefed the IGA on the recent developments in the accession of Lebanon. Since the Chairperson's visit to Beirut in March 2016, the accession of Lebanon, which had been dormant since 2009, has slowly gained a momentum to re-start the formal Working Party process. Following the technical work undertaken by the Lebanese team in 2016, there has been an improved political environment with the appointment of a new President, H.E. Michel Aoun in October 2016, followed by the formation of a new Government led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri in December. Early in the New Year, the Chairperson got in touch with the new Trade Minister Mr Raed Khoury, who is also the Chief Negotiator on Lebanon's accession.

During the Secretariat's 6-day mission to Beirut in February, the Lebanese accession team worked intensively to update all negotiating inputs. In addition, a Roadmap for the resumption of Lebanon's accession process was agreed. In March, the

Chairperson met with the delegation of Lebanon, including Ambassador Riachi Assaker in Geneva and the Secretariat, to review the latest state-of-play and next steps, including the timing for the next meeting of the Working Party.

Regarding next-steps, a comprehensive set of updated documentation is expected to be circulated to the Working Party by the end of week of 3 April. The updated documentation includes: (i) the draft Working Party Report; (ii) the Legislative Action Plan and accompanying legislation; (iii) Agriculture Supporting Tables; (iv) the questionnaires on state trading, customs valuation and import licensing procedure, as well as checklists on SPS, TBT and TRIPS; and, (iv) an *Aide Memoire* that reflect developments in Lebanon's foreign trade regime since the last Working Party in 2009. Following the circulation of the documentation, the 8th meeting of the Working Party is envisaged in May.

The Chairperson also underlined the strategic importance of Lebanon's membership in the WTO which will contribute to peace and security in the region. WTO membership could provide improved economic opportunities and economic stability for its population, which is currently overwhelmed by hosting 1.5 million of Syrian refugees, i.e. one fourth of the population. He urged Members to assist and support Lebanon on its way to WTO membership, recognizing the enormous economic and social burdens the country has undertaken. He also shared that Prime Minister Saad Hariri was visiting France and Europe to mobilize support from the international community in this regard.

Sudan: Following the last Working Party meeting held on 31 January 2017, Sudan has been preparing the negotiating inputs for the next cycle of the Working Party, including replies to Members' questions, the checklist on customs valuation, the questionnaires on state trading and import licensing procedure, as well as updates to the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime. They will be made available to the Working Party following the on-going technical exchanges with the Secretariat.

At the request of Sudan, the Secretariat has sent a technical mission to Khartoum from 3 to 7 April to assist Sudan's technical team in updating its services offer. This mission is followed by a visit of Mr Ryosuke Kuwana, Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan from 9 to 11 April. A series of meetings with the Government of Sudan, the private sector and the media are being planned during his visit to Khartoum.



Training course on Goods for WTO Accessions — Participant from Sudan — Geneva, 27-31 March 2017



Accession of Belarus — Meeting with Amb. Serpikov Geneva, 27 March 2017

Belarus: A delegation of Belarus led by Ambassador Vladimir Serpikov, Chief Negotiator for the WTO accession, visited Geneva during the week of 27 March. The delegation held bilateral meetings with several Members, including on market access negotiations. They also met with the Secretariat to exchange views on developments in the accession process and technical issues. The delegation reported on the high-level political engagement from the Government and the mobilization of technical

Accession Working Parties State of Play

resources in Minsk and at its Geneva mission, including the appointment of Mr Dmitri Fomchenko as Deputy Permanent Representative dedicated to the trade dossier.

On the multilateral front, the Secretariat transmitted to Minsk the questions received from six delegations, following the last Working Party meeting held in January. Belarus is preparing its replies to these questions, revised Agriculture Supporting Tables, the questionnaire on state trading and the draft subsidies notification. Upon receipt of these inputs, the Secretariat will prepare a draft Report of the Working Party, which will incorporate additional draft commitment paragraphs. The next meeting of the Working Party is envisaged before the summer break.

Azerbaijan: The Secretariat received and circulated the replies to questions raised by Members, a revised questionnaire on state

trading enterprises and three pieces of legislation. On the basis of these inputs, the Secretariat will revise the draft Working Party Report. Azerbaijan is also expected to submit a revised Legislative Action Plan, updated agriculture supporting tables; and the replies to questions raised on the agriculture supporting tables. The next meeting of the Working Party is tentatively scheduled for June.



Training course on Goods for WTO Accessions — Participants from Belarus and Azerbaijan — Geneva, 27-31 March 2017

Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

Fifth China Round Table on WTO Accessions, 20-23 March, Siem Reap, Cambodia



Opening Ceremony — Group photograph — 20 March 2017

The Fifth China Round on WTO Accessions Table took place on 20-23 March 2017 in Siem Reap, Cambodia under the thematic focus of "Best Practices on the Accessions of LDCs".

Over 350 participants attended the opening ceremony which was jointly opened by H.E. Mr Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, H.E. Mr Wang Shouwen, Vice Minister of Commerce of China and Mr David Shark, WTO Deputy Director-General. Participants included senior government officials from WTO Members and Observers as well as several Cambodian Deputy Prime Ministers, Senior Ministers/Ministers and Ambassadors based in Phnom Penh. Opening statements acknowledged the important role of the WTO in economic growth and poverty alleviation; and recognized the need to demonstrate solidarity and strong commitment to uphold the multilateral trading system in the current times of uncertainty and anti-globalisation.



H.E. Mr Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia

Some 50 senior government officials from 13 WTO Members and seven Observers, including eight Ministers, actively participated in the Round Table. They included: seven acceding LDCs (Bhutan, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Timor-Leste); seven Article XII LDC Members

(Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Liberia, Nepal, Samoa, and Yemen); and six other WTO Members (Argentina, China, European Union, Japan, Kenya and Oman), including former and current Working Party Chairpersons. The representatives of the Enhanced Integrated Framework Executive Secretariat, the International Monetary Fund and the International Trade Centre also attended.



H.E. Mr Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce of Liberia and H.E. Mr Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Commerce and Industries of Afghanistan

The Round Table covered several issues on the accessions of LDCs, including the state of play; the LDC accession results to date "LDC accession *acquis*"; accession negotiation strategies; post-accession implementation and associated challenges; mobilising support for WTO accession, as well as the preparation for the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, including LDC priorities for the Conference. At the end of the Round Table, participants adopted the "Siem Reap Statement" (circulated in WTO document WT/ACC/29) which outlined the best-practices on various aspects of WTO accession that emerged from the experience sharing and lessons learned.

At the Round Table, the Government of China renewed its contribution of USD 500,000 to the WTO's Least-Developed Countries and Accessions Programme (China Programme). The WTO Deputy Director-General, Mr David Shark and China's Vice Minister of Commerce, Mr Wang Shouwen, signed a Memorandum of Understanding extending the programme for the year 2017. Participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of Cambodia for the excellent organization and generous hospitality.



Signing ceremony of the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - 20 March 2017

The programme, presentations and statements are available on a dedicated webpage at: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/chinaroundprog2017_e.htm



Participants from Ethiopia and Somalia

Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities (cont'd)

Training Course on Goods Schedules for WTO Accession, 27-31 March, Geneva, Switzerland

A Training Course on Goods Schedules for WTO Accession was held from 27 to 31 March at the WTO headquarters. The course was jointly organised by the Market Access Intelligence Section of the Economic Research and Statistics Division and the Accessions Division. 28 officials participated from 12 acceding governments and 2 Members.

The course focused on the practical aspects of bilateral market access negotiations on goods, as well as the technical aspects of the goods schedules. Participants were trained on the theoretical underpinnings of market access, and engaged in practical exercises, including a 2-day simulation exercise on bilateral market access negotiations. Experience-sharing sessions were also held with the participation of former accession negotiators from the EU, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Russian Federation and the US.



The Accessions Division wishes a very Happy WTO Accession Anniversary to:

APRIL
4



The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the 18th economy that joined the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement and became the 146th Member of the WTO on 4 April 2003.

APRIL
11



Jordan is the 8th economy that joined the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement and became the 136th Member of the WTO on 11 April 2000.

APRIL
23



Nepal is the 19th economy that joined the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement and became the 147th Member of the WTO on 23 April 2004.

APRIL
26



Seychelles is the 33rd economy that joined the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement and became the 161st Member of the WTO on 26 April 2015.

APRIL
29



Montenegro is the 26th economy that joined the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement and became the 154th Member of the WTO on 29 April 2012.

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)

APRIL 2017

Tuesday, 4 April

3rd 2017 [Informal Group on Accessions](#), from 9:00 to 10:00, in Room E

MAY 2017

[10-11]

General Council

[May]

18th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the [Lebanese Republic](#)

[May]

2nd Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the [Union of the Comoros](#)

SECOND QUARTER

[TBC]

14th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of [Azerbaijan](#)

[TBC]

9th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of [Belarus](#)

[TBC]

4th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of [Sudan](#)

JULY 2017

[3-7]

[Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Greater Horn of Africa in Nairobi, Kenya]

[26-27]

General Council

TO BE SCHEDULED

[TBC]

13th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

[TBC]

1st Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of [Timor-Leste](#)

SEPTEMBER 2017

[September]

[Trade Policy Forum on Central Asia and the Multilateral Trading System, Astana, Kazakhstan]

DECEMBER 2017

11-14

11th Ministerial Conference (MC11), Buenos Aires, Argentina

Accessions Toolbox

- ◆ [Accession Working Parties](#)
- ◆ [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](#)

List of WTO Accessions Working Party Chairpersons

| No. | Government | Date Working Party established | Working Party Chairperson |
|-----|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Algeria | 17 June 1987 | H.E. Mr Gustavo Miguel Vanerio Balbela (Uruguay) |
| 2. | Andorra | 22 October 1997 | Pending |
| 3. | Azerbaijan | 16 July 1997 | H.E. Dr. Walter Werner (Germany) |
| 4. | The Bahamas | 18 July 2001 | H.E. Mr Wayne McCook (Jamaica) |
| 5. | Belarus | 27 October 1993 | H.E. Mr Kemal Madenoğlu (Turkey) |
| 6. | Bhutan* | 6 October 1999 | H.E. Mr Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria) |
| 7. | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 15 July 1999 | H.E. Dr Rajmund Kiss (Hungary) |
| 8. | Comoros, Union of the* | 9 October 2007 | H.E. Mr Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru) |
| 9. | Equatorial Guinea* | 5 February 2008 | Pending |
| 10. | Ethiopia* | 10 February 2003 | H.E. Dr Steffen Smidt (Denmark) |
| 11. | Iran | 26 May 2005 | Pending |
| 12. | Iraq | 13 December 2004 | H.E. Mr Omar Hilale (Morocco) |
| 13. | Lebanese Republic | 14 April 1999 | Mr Jean-Paul Thuillier (France) |
| 14. | Libya | 27 July 2004 | Mr Victor Echevarría Ugarte (Spain) |
| 15. | Sao Tomé and Príncipe* | 26 May 2005 | Pending |
| 16. | Serbia | 15 February 2005 | H.E. Mrs Marie-Claire Swärd Capra (Sweden) |
| 17. | Somalia* | 7 December 2016 | Pending |
| 18. | Sudan* | 25 October 1994 | Mr Ryosuke Kuwana (Japan) |
| 19. | Syrian Arab Republic | 4 May 2010 | Pending |
| 20. | Timor-Leste* | 7 December 2016 | Pending |
| 21. | Uzbekistan | 21 December 1994 | H.E. Mr Seokyoung Choi (Korea) |