



# WTO Accessions Newsletter

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

## IGA-AGENDA:

The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place on 29 October. The meeting was chaired by the Director of WTO Accessions. Members of the IGA considered: (i) the developments on the accessions of Seychelles, Kazakhstan, and Algeria; (ii) LDCs' accessions; (iii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (iv) accession WPs under "maintenance"; (v) Director General's 2014 Annual Report on Accessions; and, (vi) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2014 (annexed). Under Item 1, the Accession Transparency Reports on the Accessions of Seychelles, Kazakhstan and Algeria were presented by the Working Party (WP) Chairpersons.



Meeting of the Delegation of Seychelles with DG Azevêdo – 15 October 2014  
Final meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Seychelles – 17 October 2014  
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

## ACCESSION OF SEYCHELLES<sup>1</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> and Final Meeting of the Working Party (WP) on the Accession of the Republic of Seychelles had taken place on 17 October 2014. At that meeting, Members adopted, *ad referendum*, the Draft Accession Package of Seychelles. Members considered this accession result as a positive signal from the WTO, underscoring its systemic capacity to deliver.

<sup>1</sup> On behalf of Ms Hilda Ali Al-Hinai, WP Chairperson, the report was delivered by Mr Faisal Al Nabhani (Oman).  
30-10-2014

## 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](mailto:Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org)

As agreed at the Final WP Meeting and in accordance with long standing practice, the Secretariat would reflect all agreed technical adjustments in the final version of the Accession Package. The Package shall be re-issued on 31 October for transmission to the General Council for formal approval in December 2014. Seychelles accepted a six-month period, within which the Parliament shall ratify the Protocol on the Accession of Seychelles, following approval by the General Council.

WTO Members were praised for their support and engagement, which enabled the successful conclusion of this 19-year accession. The leadership of Minister Laporte was unanimously commended and the Negotiating Team of Seychelles, for their hard work and commitment. This historic achievement was a tribute to both the rules-based Multilateral Trading System and the Government of Seychelles.

## ACCESSION OF KAZAKHSTAN

H.E. Ambassador Vesa Himanen (Finland), Chairman of the WP) on the Accession of Kazakhstan, briefed IGA Members on recent developments on the accession of Kazakhstan. The Chairman identified "Next Steps", particularly for the next 4-5 weeks.

This accession process was at a critical juncture. Significant progress had been made on the outstanding substance and only a few issues remained to be solved. The WP Chairman urged Members to push hard to attempt a conclusion no later than December this year. The objective was to produce a Draft Accession Package in November. The Draft Services Schedule had already emerged and awaited adoption.

To conclude this accession, the Chairman underscored the complementary and supportive roles and responsibilities to be played by the Customs Union (CU/EAEU) Partners of Kazakhstan and WTO Members, alike.

Ambassador Himanen reiterated the existence of the strong political will at every level to conclude the accession of Kazakhstan by the end of 2014, at the Working Party level. Political support had been matched by substantive technical progress in the past few weeks. Updated inputs should be submitted and circulated this week (on the drafts of the: Working Party Report, Agriculture, SPS Chapters and associated documents). These would serve as basis for convening the next Cycle of Meetings from 10 to 12 November. The Chairman signalled that he would be circulating, shortly, his revised Proposal on Ordinary Customs Duties. This would reflect convergence amongst Signatory Members, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Technical issue-specific meetings would be convened in different formats to brief Members on the on-going emergence of the substance of the Draft Accession Package. The Chairman said he had tasked Director Accessions with this duty.

Meetings would be on a rolling basis and non-stop, until the negotiations were concluded. Meetings would be suspended, not adjourned. The Chairman paid tribute to Minister Aitzhanova for detailing a segment of her Negotiating Team to finalize the Draft Accession Package with Members, in Geneva. He mandated the Director of the Accessions Division to carry out expert-level

consultations, on his behalf. Members were urged to engage pragmatically and constructively with Kazakhstan. The Chairman also advised Astana that, although there was widespread support, there were no shortcuts in accession negotiations for Acceding Governments like Kazakhstan. The WP had to produce outcomes based on WTO rules. The WTO must continue to deliver.



Meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions - 29 October 2014  
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

## ACCESSION OF ALGERIA<sup>2</sup>

The visit to Algiers of the Chairperson of the WP on the Accession of Algeria, H.E. Ambassador Alberto D'Alotto (Argentina), took place on 18-21 October. The purpose of the visit was to advance on the substance of Algeria's accession negotiations and confirm high level political commitment. The 4-day visit included meetings and extensive discussions with the Minister of Trade, H.E. Mr. Amara Benyounes, and his negotiating team; the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Industry, Agriculture and Energy; the President of the Bank of Algeria; Members of Parliament; and, with the Chiefs of Enterprises Forum (FCE) and the Economic Operators Confederation (CGOEA). Ambassador D'Alotto also met with H.E. Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal. During the visit, the WP Chairperson re-confirmed high level political support.

Outstanding issues were discussed with the Algerian authorities. These, *inter alia*, included: finalization of bilateral market access negotiations; structural reforms (particularly, in the areas of investment regime, services, State controlled and State trading enterprises, gas pricing and price controls, transit, export subsidies, tax exemptions, import licensing and other import restrictions); and, transitional periods. Several stakeholders expressed interest in organizing a national seminar, where WTO rules would be explained. The Chairman's visit was an important step forward in the accession process of Algeria. Algerian leadership reaffirmed its determination and engagement.

In advance of the next WP Meeting, Algeria is required to submit the following inputs: (i) replies to Members'

<sup>2</sup> On behalf of H.E. Amb. Alberto D'Alotto (Argentina), WP Chairperson, the statement was delivered by Mr Rodrigo Bardoneschi (Argentina).

questions; (ii) updated Legislative Action Plan; (iii) revised Agriculture Supporting Tables; (iv) improved commitment paragraphs for the Draft Working Party Report (DWPR).

## LDCs' ACCESSIONS

**Liberia:** Members were informed that there are all-round concerted efforts to facilitate and fast-track the Accession of Liberia. These efforts are finding traction on the basis of substantive engagement led by Liberian Chief Negotiator, Minister Axel Addy. The set priority of Monrovia was for a 2015 conclusion. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo, following an exchange of communication H.E. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, has urged WTO Members to transform the challenge faced by Liberia into a unique opportunity for accelerating Liberia's accession negotiations to an early conclusion. In October, the Secretariat met with Ms Anna Stelling, Director-General of the Swedish National Board of Trade, and H.E. Amb. Daniel Blockert (Sweden), to take stock of the Liberian Accession in light of technical assistance and capacity-building by Sweden in context of assistance by the European Union (EU). Far-reaching accession specific technical assistance and capacity building were being provided by the United States, China and multilateral institutions such as the International Trade Center (ITC) and others. H.E. Ambassador Joakim Reiter, WP Chairperson would be consulting with WP Members to ascertain how best to meet the 2015 target set by Monrovia. To this end, a specific Road Map was operational between Monrovia and the WTO Secretariat.

On 29 October, Monrovia had submitted its first substantive set of inputs which included: (i) initial market access offers on goods and services, (ii) responses to Members' questions and, (iii) a Legislative Action Plan. These documents were being processed by the Secretariat for circulation.



H.E. Minister Axel Addy (Liberia) - WTO Public Forum - 2 October 2014  
Meeting with the Swedish National Board of Trade - 1 October 2014  
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

## OTHER ACCESSION WP IN FOCUS<sup>3</sup>

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** This accession was advanced. Sarajevo had submitted two pieces of legislation: on GMOs; and on anti-dumping and countervailing duties. The ball remained in the court of Sarajevo on the timing

for the conclusion of its accession. Members stood ready to assist Sarajevo to cross the finish line.

**Serbia:** The Secretariat met with a Delegation from Belgrade, on 15 October. During this visit to Geneva, the Serbian Delegation held bilateral market access negotiations. The ball was also in their court to enact outstanding draft laws and conclude remaining bilaterals.

## MAINTENANCE WORK

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

**Azerbaijan:** Baku was in the process of providing clarifications on its replies to Members' Questions and updating relevant negotiating inputs. A revised market access offer on goods and a revised Legislative Action Plan had been submitted. These documents were being processed by the Secretariat.

**Belarus:** The newly appointed WP Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Haluk Ilicak (Turkey) had met with Mr. Aleksandr Guryanov, Deputy Foreign Minister and Belarus Chief Negotiator, on 28 October. There was stock-taking. Required negotiating inputs were identified. They included: (i) updated Factual Summary, which would serve as basis for a future Draft Working Party Report; (ii) Legislative Action Plan; and, (iii) revised market access offers that would take account of all CU-related market access developments so far, and bilateral market access agreements that might have been concluded and signed by Belarus. Deputy Minister Guryanov reiterated the readiness to reactivate the accession of Belarus, fully and effectively, in light of the imminent conclusion of the Accession of Kazakhstan and the entry into force of the Eurasian Economic Union on 1 January 2015. The WP Chairperson would consult with Members to decide on the "Next Steps".

**Bhutan:** The last Working Party Meeting on the Accession of Bhutan had been held in January 2008. On 13 October 2014, WTO Director-General Azevêdo met with Mr Lyonpo Norbu Wangchuk, Minister of Economic Affairs of Bhutan. The Minister confirmed Bhutan's plan to accede to the WTO. He requested capacity building and outreach activities. WTO Director-General confirmed the Secretariat's readiness to assist Bhutan. H.E. Amb. Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria) is the newly appointed Chairman of the Working Party.

**Iraq:** Recently, Baghdad had established a Permanent Trade Office in Geneva to work exclusively on WTO Accession. The Secretariat was providing technical assistance across a range of accession substance. The next meeting of the Working Party would convene when required inputs are submitted.

## 2014 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL ON ACCESSIONS

The IGA was briefed on the preparations for the Director-General's 2014 Annual Report on Accessions. In accordance with practice, Members would review the Annual Report at the December General Council. Substantively, in keeping with practice the report would provide a technical update on the operational state-of-play of Accession WPs; with a thematic Section (which this year would be focused on Post-Accession support); and, the Director-General would offer his own proper

<sup>3</sup> The priority focus in any given year is based on technical maturity.

assessments on progress made and challenges accompanied with prospects for the year to ahead.

#### **OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

The Annual Outreach Cycle with Regional Groups had been initiated before the Summer Break. Accession state-of-play briefings had twice been provided for the Informal Group of Developing Countries (IGDCs).

A dedicated briefing had been scheduled for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), for 30 October. Appointments were being sought with other groups.

The Secretariat continued to provide demand-driven technical assistance to acceding governments and deliver accession-specific sessions in Advanced Trade Policy Courses.

## ANNEX

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)<sup>3</sup>

Date	Working Party	Time	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
						EN-FR-ES	Own
[10-12 November 2014]	Kazakhstan	November Cycle of Meetings		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	YES
[Thursday, 27 November 2014]	IGA	09:00 – 10:30	10 <sup>th</sup> 2014 Informal Group on Accessions (AM)	Convening Notice pending	S3	NO	NO
[December 2014]	Kazakhstan	Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	YES
[8-12 December 2014]	[29 <sup>th</sup> Geneva Week]						
[10-11 December 2014]	[General Council]						
[1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015]	Liberia	2 <sup>nd</sup> Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015]	Azerbaijan	12 <sup>th</sup> Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 <sup>th</sup> Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO

**Note:**

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to: [accessions@wto.org](mailto:accessions@wto.org)

<sup>3</sup> 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.