

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER



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WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Seventh Session of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) – 23 July 2015

Agenda:

- ✦ Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus: **Liberia** and **Kazakhstan**
- ✦ Accession Working Parties under Maintenance: **Belarus** and **Bahamas**
- ✦ Accessions developments – Expressions of interest to re-start: **Sudan** and **Lebanon**
- ✦ Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview (Dushanbe & Nairobi)
- ✦ WTO Deputy Director-General's meeting with the Accessions Division interns & the Community Forum

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

Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus

Least-Developed countries (LDCs)

Liberia: This LDC 2015 accession priority is rapidly maturing. The Liberian Negotiating Team led by Minister Axel Addy, the Chief Negotiator, is in Geneva, for the 3rd Cycle of WP Meetings. **Bilateral track:** All bilateral market access agreements between Liberia and 6 Signatory Members have been concluded. The signing ceremonies of the bilateral agreements with Canada, the European Union, Thailand and the United States have taken place. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo has paid tribute to these Members who continued to support, strongly, acceding governments, particularly the LDCs with limited negotiating capacity. The Draft Consolidated Schedules on Goods and Services had been circulated to Signatory Members on 17 July. The Technical Verification Meeting has been scheduled for 28 July. **Multilateral track:** The 3rd Working Party Meeting is scheduled for today, 23 July. In advance of the meeting, the revised Draft Working Party (DWPR) had been circulated, with its corrigendum. The revised DWPR, circulated to Members of WP on 30 June, is in its close-to-final form. Monrovia has made high level policy decisions on domestic reforms associated with its accession. Recent work included, the rationalization of the structure of fees and charges for services rendered and excise tax, removal of internal discriminatory measures and barriers to trade legal and regulatory projects associated with raising domestic standards to global levels and best practices. Members acknowledged that Liberian President H.E. Ms Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was a strong reformer, dedicated to accelerating the growth of her country and enhancing its welfare.

Members were informed that at the recently concluded Third UN International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis, H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo met with Ambassador Joakim Reiter, Chairman of the Working Party, to take stock of Liberia's WTO accession negotiations. President Johnson-Sirleaf reaffirmed Liberia's commitment to WTO-consistent reforms and the 2015 WTO Accession of Liberia, as a priority for her government.



Bilateral Market Access Agreement signed between Liberia and 4 Signatory Members (Canada, EU, Thailand and US) in July 2015 – Sealed with a toast!

2015 Accessions "Deliverable"

Kazakhstan

On Monday, 27 July 2015, the WTO General Council would consider for formal adoption the Report of the Working Party on the Accession of the Republic of Kazakhstan in document WT/ACC/KAZ/93, together with the two addenda containing the Goods and Services Schedules. This would be the first agenda item of the upcoming General Council.

2015 Accessions Maintenance

Belarus: The Delegation of Belarus is in contact with the Secretariat on the technical basis for the resumption of its Accession Working Party, following the conclusion of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan in June.

Bahamas: The Bahamas had signalled its intent to re-start its Accession negotiations. Recently, Nassau had submitted the Negotiating Inputs, which included: (i) its Factual Summary, (ii) an updated Legislative Action Plan, and, (iii) three pieces of legislation (the Value Added Tax Act 2014; Value Added Tax Regulations 2014; and Protection of Revenue Order). The Secretariat was processing the inputs and would provide Nassau with a feedback on the substance of the submission with the overall purpose of facilitating the Accession. The submitted inputs would be circulated as soon as the processing had been completed in accordance with WTO standards. At this stage, the next meeting of the Working Party meeting could be envisaged in the second half of November.



Meeting with the delegation of Sudan, Minister Elsadiq Mohamed Ali Hasab Elrasoul, State Minister, Ministry of Trade Sudan, 9 July 2015

Expressions of Interest to Re-start

Sudan: Mr. Elsadiq Mohamed Ali Hasab Elrasoul, State Minister, Ministry of Trade Sudan met with the Director of the Accessions Division to signal the interest of Sudan to re-restart its accession negotiations. The Secretariat had identified the basic steps, required for the re-start of any dormant and/or inactive accessions.

Lebanon: Ms. Alia ABBAS, Director-General of the Ministry of Economy and Trade also met with the Director of the Accessions Division to signal the interest of Lebanon to re-restart its accession negotiations. The Secretariat reviewed the basic steps, required for the re-start of any dormant and/or inactive accessions.

UNECE Seminar on Central Asia

On 3 July, the Accessions Division (Accessions Director) attended a High-level Seminar on 'Regional Cooperation on Trade in Central Asia' held at *Palais des Nations* by UNECE. High level representatives from Central Asia and neighbouring countries and organizations such as ITC, UNCTAD, UNIDO, and OECD had participated. The Accessions Director intervened to suggest that its contributions to the region would be based on WTO core values of the market economy, greater trade openness, good governance and the rule of law. In a region, where connectivity was a principal challenge, the implementation of the fundamentals of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, would make a decisive difference in regional integration, development and connection to value chains to improve the business environment and enhance welfare. The HLS was informed that WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had noted that the region was of strategic importance in the global economy and for the WTO. The participants were briefed on the 3rd China Round Table in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and the Dushanbe statement (WT/ACC/24). The Dushanbe Statement reiterated the significance of post-accession best practices and maximizing the benefits of membership. An important outcome from the 3rd China Round Table had been that Central Asia would be a region of priority for the WTO. There would be greater "delivery focus" on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. WTO Accessions were about global integration, domestic reform, market access, rule of law and transparency.

Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview

- ✚ As follow-up to the 3rd China Round Table, Dushanbe, 2–4 June 2015, post-accession questionnaire had been sent to Article XII Members last week. This questionnaire would assist the Secretariat in collecting post-accession practices more comprehensively, as requested by participants at the Dushanbe Round Table. The Secretariat awaits the inputs and feedback from the polled members to the questionnaire so as to deepen the study, as requested by Members.
- ✚ The 4th China Round Table would take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 13 to 14 December 2015, back-to-back with MC10. The Government of Kenya had agreed to host the Round Table, which was being sponsored by the Government of China and organized by the WTO Secretariat. Invitation letters would be sent out shortly.
- ✚ Preparations were underway for the 2nd Global Seminar on Accessions; the 10-year Anniversary of Saudi Arabia's WTO membership; and, the launch of the book by the WTO Director-General:

"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>

- ✚ The activities would take place from 28 to 30 September 2015, and had been designed to blend with this year's theme for the WTO Public Forum: "Trade Works".

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

The WTO Deputy Director-General, Dave Shark met with the Accessions Division interns on 16 June 2015



What else happened since the last IGA meeting?

The Accessions Division briefed other WTO Secretariat Divisions at the WTO Community Forum, on 7 July 2015



EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
Thursday, 23 July 2015	IGA	7 th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening fax dated 16/07/2015 refers	E
Thursday, 23 July 2015	Liberia	3 rd Working Party Meeting	WTO/AIR/ACC/4 refers	W
Tuesday, 28 July 2015	Liberia	Technical Verification Meeting on Goods and Services Schedule with Signatory Members - Restricted Access	Convening fax dated 17/07/2015 refers	B
27-28 July 2015	General Council			
27-31 July 2015	Geneva Week			
[Thursday, 24 September 2015]	IGA	8 th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	E
[End September/Beginning October 2015]	Liberia	4 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[4 th Quarter 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

ACCESSIONS TOOLBOX

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