

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Sixth Session of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) – 25 June 2015

Agenda:

- ✦ Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus: **Afghanistan, Liberia** and **Kazakhstan**
- ✦ Accession Working Parties under Maintenance: **Belarus** and **Comoros**
- ✦ Accession-related developments – Expressions of interest in WTO accession: **Timor-Leste**
- ✦ Accessions Best Practices
- ✦ Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview (Dushanbe & Nairobi China Round Tables)

The session was chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Director of the Accessions Division). H.E. Amb. Joakim Reiter, Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia, reported to Members on the progress in the accession of Liberia.

Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus Least-Developed countries (LDCs)

Liberia: H.E. Ambassador Joakim Reiter, Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia, reported to IGA Members on progress on the accession negotiations of Liberia. Significant progress had been made. In his consultations, Members continued to underline that the accession of Liberia was a 2015 priority for their capitals. Technically, work on the substance of the 3 basic pillars of the Draft Accession Package was apace, although there was outstanding work to be completed in several areas. To sustain the 2015 target, Chairman Reiter underlined that the basic profile of the Draft Accession Package should emerge by end-July. Since the last Cycle of WP Meetings on 7 May, Liberia and Members, supported by the Secretariat, had been in sustained technical engagement to clarify a range of technical issues. Minister Addy, the Chief Negotiator was in steady contact and technically engaged. The Chief Negotiator would be in Geneva from the start of the week of 29 June to sustain the momentum on outstanding questions. **Draft Working Party Report:** The revised Draft Working Party Report (DWPR) would be circulated by end-June, depending on the supply of remaining required inputs from Monrovia. The Chairman expressed his appreciation to several Members for drafting suggestions. **Bilateral market access negotiations:** The Chairman reported that at the closure of the timeline established by the Working Party, collectively, 6 Members expressed interest in negotiating with Liberia, to assist Liberia in expanding its market access opportunities (Canada, the EU, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and, the US). Japan had completed, signed and deposited its bilateral market access agreement with Liberia with the Director-General. The Chairman urged remaining Members to urgently conclude the bilateral negotiations underway with Liberia, sign and deposit with the Secretariat no later than end-June. It was his aim to mandate the Secretariat to consolidate the bilateral results and circulate the Draft Consolidated Goods and Services Schedules of Liberia to the 6 Signatory Members for technical verification before the Summer Break. Canada, the EU, and the US reported to the IGA that their bilateral negotiations with Liberia had been concluded, in principle, and that signing ceremonies should be scheduled soon. Chinese Taipei reported advanced progress and that its bilateral agreement with Liberia would be signed as soon as domestic procedures were completed. Ambassador Reiter congratulated Members for their reports, noting that, "this was better than I expected, today"! The Chairman informed Members that he planned to convene the 3rd Meeting of the Working Party in the third week of July, to take stock of the results so far and decide on "Next Steps" for finalising the WP mandate, after the Summer Break. He also informed Members that he had asked the Secretariat to start piecing together the components of the Draft Accession Package, as they mature and emerge. The Chairman thanked Members for their constructive engagement and pragmatism.



6th IGA meeting, 25 June 2015
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Accessions Best Practices: Market Access Negotiations

Director Accessions noted several aspects of longstanding accession best practices in relation to expressions of interest for market access negotiations with Acceding Governments and, the opening and closure of these negotiations. The right of Members to request for market access negotiations was unabridged. However, Working Party Chairpersons had requested the Secretariat to reiterate these longstanding practices for good order.

Afghanistan: H.E. Mr. Homayoun Rasa, Minister of Commerce and Industries, had signalled that Afghanistan desired finalising its accession process as soon as possible. Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, Deputy Minister for Commerce and Industries and the Chief Negotiator on the accession of Afghanistan, was in steady contact with the WTO Secretariat. Kabul was still reviewing the Draft Accession Package and was yet to take a final decision. The IGA was reminded that the draft Package had been circulated in March 2014. As a consequence, re-start of the process and a decision by Members would require technical updates to reflect developments in Afghanistan's legal and regulatory regime since March 2014.

Non-LDCs

Kazakhstan: The Secretariat conveyed to Members the appreciation of WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for their collective and decisive effort to conclude the Accession of Kazakhstan at the Final Working Party Meeting on 22 June. Members were informed that the Secretariat, in accordance with practice, had re-issued the "Report of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan", as adopted by Members, in document WT/ACC/KAZ/93, together with the two addenda containing the Goods and Services Schedules, on 24 June. On Next Steps, the Director General, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Council and Members, would place the standard item: "Report of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan", on the agenda of the General Council, as soon as possible. H.E. Mrs. Zhanar Aitghanova, Minister for Economic Integration and the Chief Negotiator on the accession of Kazakhstan, had informed Members of the objective of her Government to finalise its domestic ratification process by the end-October, so that Kazakhstan could participate in the WTO Tenth Ministerial Conference as a full-fledged Member of the Organization.



3rd China Round Table – 2-5 June 2015 – Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Group Photo of the participants, Group Photo of the participants of the International Trade and Investment Conference (1 June 2015), Meetings with H.E. Mr. Kokhir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of Tajikistan

Maintenance

Belarus: Following the Final meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan, on 22 July, Belarus had contacted the Secretariat. It requested that the Secretariat appeal to Members to support the rapid re-start of the process in the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus. Minsk was signalling its commitment to engagement, substantively and constructively. Belarus had signalled that it would shortly revert to the Secretariat and seek a meeting with H.E. Ambassador Haluk Ilıcak (Turkey), Chairman of the Working Party, to ascertain how best to proceed and define the way forward.

Comoros: On 3 June, Moroni had submitted documentation to re-start the preparation for the 1st meeting of the Working Party, which is envisaged, tentatively, for end of Q3 this year. The documentation received from Comoros included: (i) replies to Members' questions on Comoros' Foreign Trade Regime; and (ii) the responses to the questionnaires on State Trading Enterprises, Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, Customs Valuation, Import Licensing, TBT, and SPS. The inputs, which were received in French, would be made available to Members of the Working Party, in English, by end July.

Expressions of Interest in WTO membership

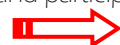
Timor-Leste: The IGA was informed that Timor-Leste had submitted an application for WTO accession on 13 April 2015. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had advised Timor-Leste to submit the required description of Timor-Leste's foreign trade regime. This was a requirement before the application could be formally considered. The General Council Chairman had been advised that Timor-Leste was in the process of preparing the outstanding component to complete its application documentation.



20th and final meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan – 22 June 2015 (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview

- ✚ The 3rd China Round Table, focusing on "Post-Accession", had taken place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from 2 to 5 June 2015. This Round Table had been organised by the WTO Secretariat, in partnership with the Government of China and the Government of Tajikistan, under the China Programme. The Round Table had been well attended by 40 participants from Article XII Members and Acceding Governments, as well as the representatives from multilateral and regional organisations, and bilateral development partners. Participants had a rich exchange of views on their post-accession experiences, implementation of the obligations of membership and, maximization of the benefits of WTO membership. The Round Table outcome document: *"The Dushanbe Statement"* had been circulated in WTO document WT/ACC/24. The final programme and presentations were available on the WTO website under the Accessions Section.
- ✚ 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 is being sponsored by the Government of China and organized by the WTO Secretariat.
- ✚ WTO Twentieth Anniversary Accession Activities: These activities comprised the 2nd Global Seminar on Accessions; the 10-year Anniversary of Saudi Arabia's WTO membership; and, the launch by the WTO Director-General of the book "WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons for 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 programme for the activities, scheduled for 28-30 September 2015, would be posted on the WTO website in the week of 29 June. Arrangements had been completed. Invitations had been forwarded to all guest speakers and participants. Confirmations of participation from guest speakers and participants had been received.



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

ACCESSIONS TOOLBOX

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

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

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
[Thursday, 23 July 2015]	IGA	7th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	E
[End July 2015]	Liberia	3 rd Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[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
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[3 rd Quarter 2015]	Comoros	1 st 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