



Membership

- > Yemen joined the WTO in June 2014, raising the WTO membership to 160.
- > In December, the General Council adopted the accession terms of Seychelles, clearing the way for the country to join the WTO in April 2015.
- > WTO membership accounts for 98 per cent of world trade compared with 91 per cent in 1995.

Joining the WTO	22
Welcoming new members	24
A global membership	26

Joining the WTO

Yemen joined the WTO in June 2014, raising the WTO membership to 160. In December, the General Council adopted the accession terms of Seychelles, clearing the way for the country to join the WTO in April 2015. A number of other aspiring members made progress with their accessions. The WTO strengthened its technical assistance programme for acceding governments.

On 26 June 2014, Yemen became the 160th WTO member, closing a 13-year long chapter of negotiating its accessions terms with WTO member countries. On 10 December 2014, the General Council approved the accession of Seychelles, paving the way for it to become the WTO's newest member in April 2015, following ratification of the deal (see page 24). This accession brings the WTO another step nearer its goal of universal membership.

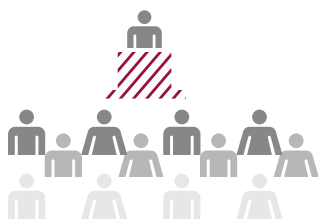
Director-General Roberto Azevêdo issued the Sixth Annual Report on WTO Accessions in November 2014. The report provides detailed information on the work on WTO accessions, the benefits of WTO membership, policy issues and challenges, and on the post-accession performance of countries that have joined since the establishment of the WTO in 1995. Through accessions, the WTO has expanded its world trade coverage from 91 per cent in 1995 to 98 per cent in 2014, according to the report.

Background on joining the WTO

The WTO is open to states or customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations. To join the WTO, a government has to bring its economic and trade policies in line with WTO rules and principles, and negotiate with interested, individual trading partners on guaranteed minimum levels of access to their domestic markets for goods and services. It can take many years to become a WTO member because it requires the full support and consensus of the existing membership. However, the accession process is designed to ensure that new members are able to participate fully in the multilateral trading system from the outset.

> Stepping up technical assistance

Technical assistance was strengthened in 2014, with acceding governments invited to participate in over 120 technical assistance events (see page 122), up from over 100 events in 2013.



161

The WTO has 161 members following the accession of Yemen in June 2014 and Seychelles in April 2015.

The WTO Secretariat continued with the implementation of China's Least-Developed Countries and Accessions Programme (also known as the China Programme). The programme aims to assist acceding least-developed countries (LDCs) and strengthen LDC members' participation in the WTO. As part of the China Programme, five interns (from China, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda) were selected in 2014 to participate in the internship scheme at the WTO Secretariat.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the WTO Secretariat continued their work under the joint ITC-WTO programme in support of the private sector in acceding developing countries and LDCs. Working Party chairs visited several acceding governments to meet key domestic stakeholders to promote outreach, answer questions and improve understanding of WTO membership. The Accessions Division also undertook briefings for newly designated Working Party chairs and new delegates as well as workshops for parliamentarians and civil society.

Regular meetings of the Informal Group on Accessions, the WTO accessions newsletter, the Director-General's Annual Report on WTO Accessions and the annual accessions' outreach dialogue with WTO groupings all served to further enhance transparency. In 2014, this dialogue included the Informal Group of Developing Countries, the Latin American and Caribbean Group, the African Group and the Asian Group of Developing Members.

Membership of the WTO

160 members (as of 31 December 2014)¹

Member ²	Year of accession	Member ²	Year of accession	Member ²	Year of accession
Albania	2000	Hong Kong, China	1995	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	2005
Angola	1996	Hungary	1995	Senegal	1995
Antigua and Barbuda	1995	Iceland	1995	Sierra Leone	1995
Argentina	1995	India	1995	Singapore	1995
Armenia	2003	Indonesia	1995	Slovak Republic	1995
Australia	1995	Ireland	1995	Slovenia	1995
Austria	1995	Israel	1995	Solomon Islands	1996
Bahrain, Kingdom of	1995	Italy	1995	South Africa	1995
Bangladesh	1995	Jamaica	1995	Spain	1995
Barbados	1995	Japan	1995	Sri Lanka	1995
Belgium	1995	Jordan	2000	Suriname	1995
Belize	1995	Kenya	1995	Swaziland	1995
Benin	1996	Korea, Republic of	1995	Sweden	1995
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	1995	Kuwait, the State of	1995	Switzerland	1995
Botswana	1995	Kyrgyz Republic	1998	Chinese Taipei	2002
Brazil	1995	Latvia	1999	Tajikistan	2013
Brunei Darussalam	1995	Lao People's Democratic Republic	2013	Tanzania	1995
Bulgaria	1996	Lesotho	1995	Thailand	1995
Burkina Faso	1995	Liechtenstein	1995	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)	2003
Burundi	1995	Lithuania	2001	Togo	1995
Cambodia	2004	Luxembourg	1995	Tonga	2007
Cameroon	1995	Macao, China	1995	Trinidad and Tobago	1995
Canada	1995	Madagascar	1995	Tunisia	1995
Cabo Verde	2008	Malawi	1995	Turkey	1995
Central African Republic	1995	Malaysia	1995	Uganda	1995
Chad	1996	Maldives	1995	Ukraine	2008
Chile	1995	Mali	1995	United Arab Emirates	1996
China	2001	Malta	1995	United Kingdom	1995
Colombia	1995	Mauritania	1995	United States of America	1995
Congo	1997	Mauritius	1995	Uruguay	1995
Costa Rica	1995	Mexico	1995	Vanuatu	2012
Côte d'Ivoire	1995	Moldova, Republic of	2001	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	1995
Croatia	2000	Mongolia	1997	Viet Nam	2007
Cuba	1995	Montenegro	2012	Yemen	2014
Cyprus	1995	Morocco	1995	Zambia	1995
Czech Republic	1995	Mozambique	1995	Zimbabwe	1995
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1997	Myanmar	1995		
Denmark	1995	Namibia	1995		
Djibouti	1995	Nepal	2004		
Dominica	1995	Netherlands	1995		
Dominican Republic	1995	New Zealand	1995		
Ecuador	1996	Nicaragua	1995		
Egypt	1995	Niger	1996		
El Salvador	1995	Nigeria	1995		
Estonia	1999	Norway	1995		
European Union	1995	Oman	2000		
Fiji	1996	Pakistan	1995		
Finland	1995	Panama	1997		
France	1995	Papua New Guinea	1996		
Gabon	1995	Paraguay	1995		
The Gambia	1996	Peru	1995		
Georgia	2000	Philippines	1995		
Germany	1995	Poland	1995		
Ghana	1995	Portugal	1995		
Greece	1995	Qatar	1996		
Grenada	1996	Romania	1995		
Guatemala	1995	Russian Federation	2012		
Guinea	1995	Rwanda	1996		
Guinea-Bissau	1995	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1996		
Guyana	1995	Saint Lucia	1995		
Haiti	1996	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1995		
Honduras	1995	Samoa	2012		

Countries that officially became WTO members in 2014

	Date of formal WTO membership
Yemen	26 June 2014

Countries that completed their WTO accession negotiations in 2014

	Date of approval of accession package ¹
Seychelles	10 December 2014

¹ Seychelles became the WTO's 161st member in April 2015 following the ratification of its accession package.

² Members are mostly states but can also be customs territories with full autonomy over their external commercial relations.

Welcoming new members

On 10 December, the General Council approved the accession package of Seychelles after 18 years of negotiations. Following ratification of the accession protocol, Seychelles became the WTO's newest member in 2015. The terms and conditions contain commitments covering all WTO rules.

The WTO accession process promotes the integration of new members into the global economy subject to binding and enforceable trade rules. Seychelles undertook to liberalize its trade regime and accelerate its integration into the world economy. Seychelles' accession package contains specific commitments binding it to WTO rules and includes, where necessary, specific transition periods which have been negotiated to respond to particular needs in a given area. It contains negotiated concessions and commitments on market access for goods and services.

Seychelles became a WTO member on 26 April 2015, 30 days after it notified the WTO of its acceptance of the accession terms and conditions. It joined the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) (see page 64) upon accession and will initiate negotiations to accede to the Government Procurement Agreement (see page 43) within 12 months of its WTO membership.

At the 10 December General Council meeting, Seychelles' Minister of Finance, Trade and Investment, Pierre Laporte declared: "WTO membership will bring immense benefits to our economy, from businesses to consumers. The Seychelles Government and its people have been looking forward for so long to be part of this international family." He added: "The reforms that we had to undertake during the accession process have already brought about important benefits. Our laws and policies are now at par with best international standards and our private sector has already begun to reap the benefits of a more predictable and transparent trading system."

Our country now has a platform which provides us as a small island nation with an equal opportunity as our large counterparts, to make our voice heard on trade issues. Seychelles will increase its visibility on the international stage."

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo paid special tribute to the Government of Seychelles for sending "a clear signal to all its trading partners that it is ready to engage fully in the multilateral trading system and in the global economy. Seychelles' accession is another sign of the continued importance of the multilateral trading system."

During the accession process, WTO members worked with Seychelles to adapt its trade laws to WTO rules and train its government officials. WTO members are committed to continue to provide Seychelles with required technical assistance in its post-accession process.

18 years

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Seychelles



Accession Working Party report

Number of paragraphs	423
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Paragraphs with commitment language	40
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Market access for goods

Average final bound tariff rates:

All goods	9.5%
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Agricultural goods	16.9%
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Non-agricultural goods	8.3%
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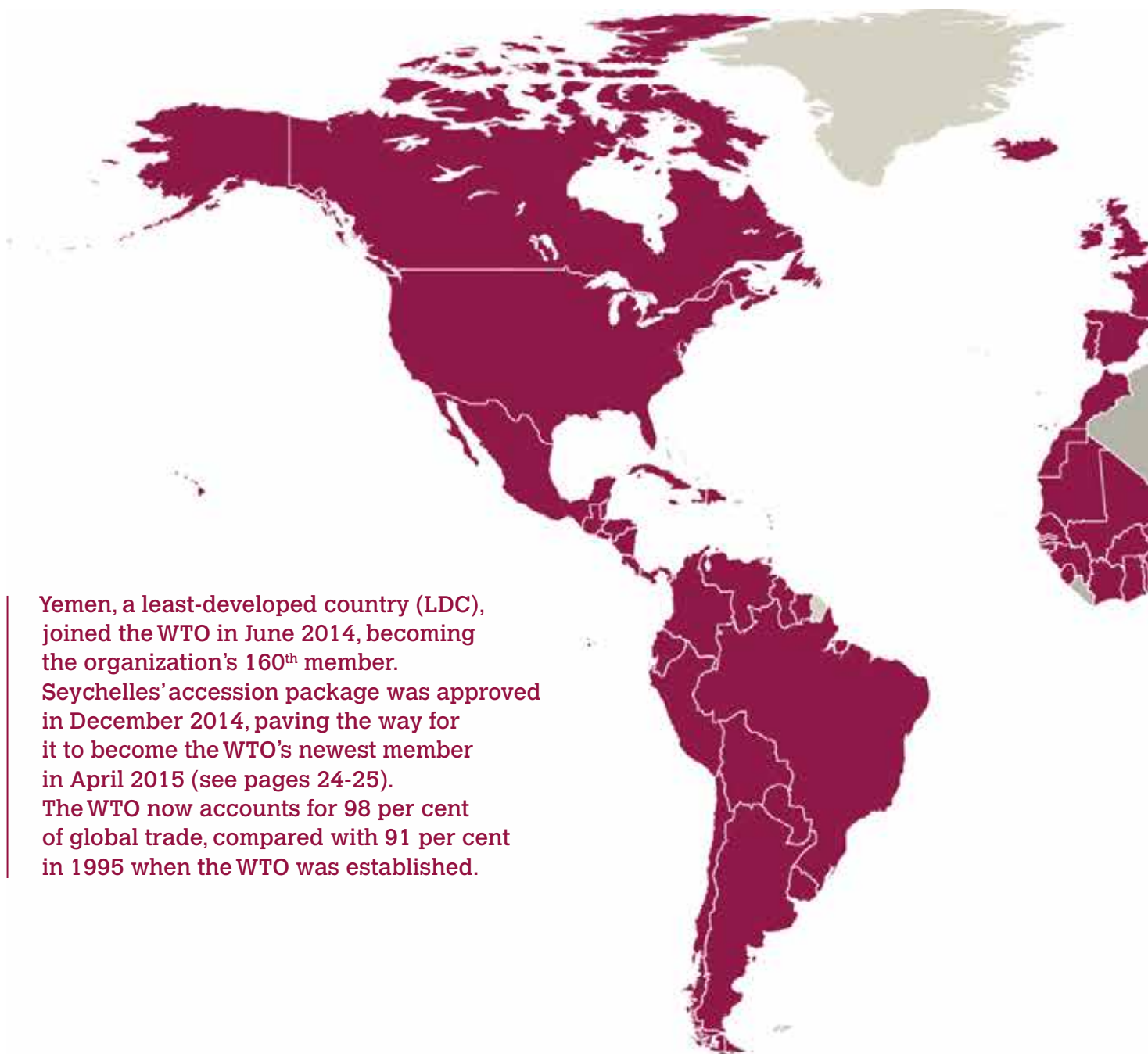
Market access for services

Sectors	11
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Sub-sectors	97
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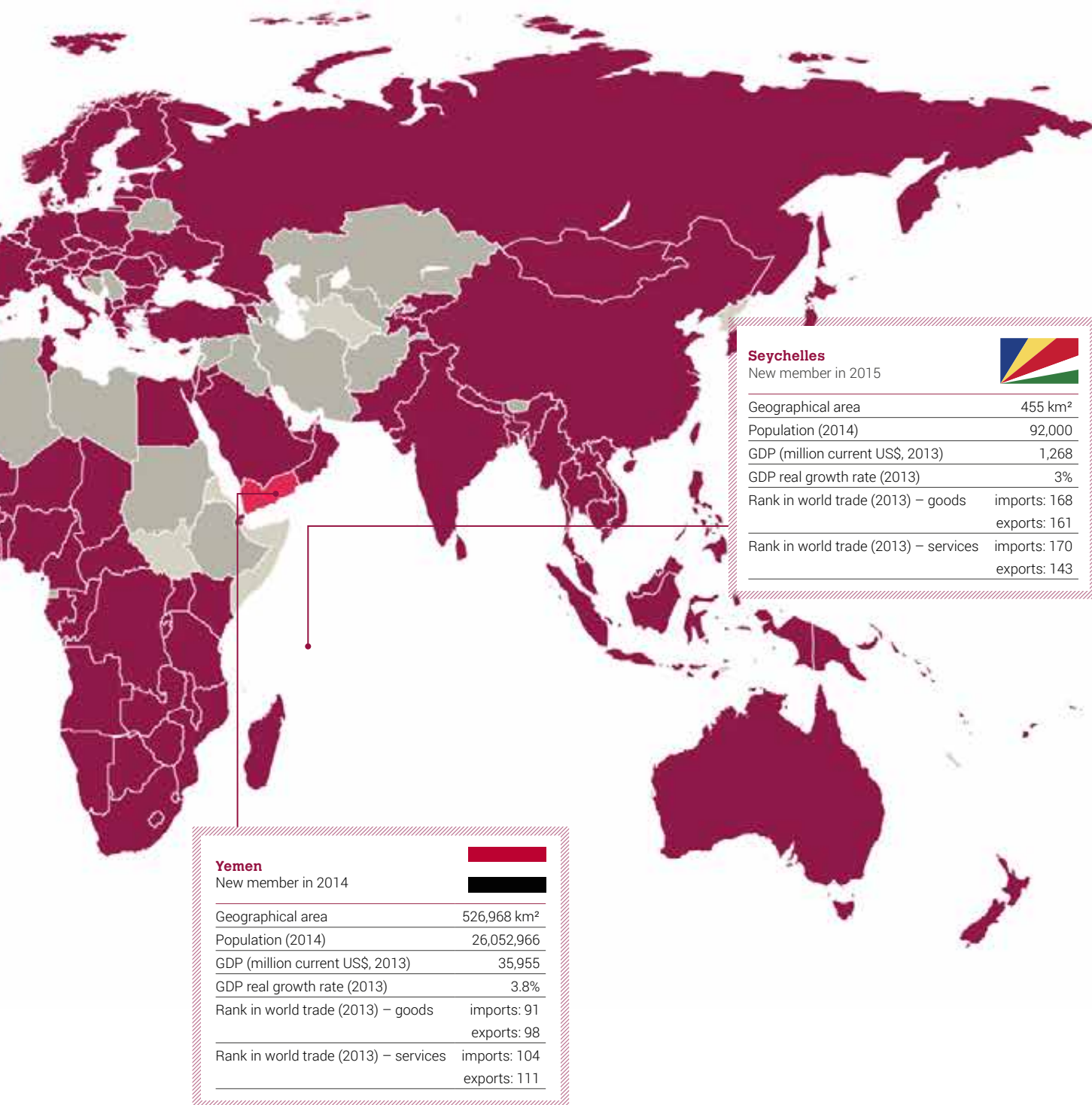


A global membership



Yemen, a least-developed country (LDC), joined the WTO in June 2014, becoming the organization's 160th member. Seychelles' accession package was approved in December 2014, paving the way for it to become the WTO's newest member in April 2015 (see pages 24-25). The WTO now accounts for 98 per cent of global trade, compared with 91 per cent in 1995 when the WTO was established.

- WTO members
- New members in 2014
- Observers
- Non-members



Source: WTO