

**EIGHTH CHINA ROUND TABLE ON WTO ACCESSIONS  
MOSCOW, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, 4-6 DECEMBER 2019**

**ACCESSIONS AND WTO REFORM: ON THE ROAD TO MC12**

CLOSING REMARKS

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Over the past two days, delegates had positive and constructive communication. I would like to share with you my observations on several points.

**First**, this Round Table meeting demonstrated the sense of responsibility of all of us for the multilateral trading system. The fundamentals of the MTS are facing severe threats from unilateralism and protectionism, the global economy is undergoing rapid change and the WTO faces new challenges. Against this background, accessions have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the evolution of the multilateral trading system. First of all, by geographic means. At the same time, acceding governments have the potential to light the path forward for the MTS. WTO accessions can provide a source of inspiration and valuable lessons that would help the multilateral trading system to develop a systemic response. The fundamental aim is to jointly make the WTO more responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of the global economy.

In this regard, it is important that acceding governments follow the WTO's current agenda, including the WTO Reform which was widely discussed over the past 2 days. I believe these discussions were especially relevant in the context of the upcoming MC-12. Having 22 economies in the WTO accession queue, it is vital that specific proposals and recommendations of them are heard at the topmost decision-making body of the WTO. Since WTO rules are now to a bigger extent being developed in a plurilateral manner, I believe it is highly important that acceding governments get full access to the plurilateral formats and discussions in Geneva.

**Second**, the Round table provided a good opportunity for an exchange of views on the specific challenges facing the acceding governments and ways to overcome these challenges. It was underlined that accession-related activity continues to grow in recent years. This is reflected in the seriousness and energy from many of the 22 acceding governments, supported by increased engagement of WTO Members and partners. Since 2016, when the Organization welcomed the last new Members – Afghanistan and Liberia, there have been three new WTO accession applications – from Somalia, Timor-Leste and South Sudan. At this Roundtable, there are two countries – Curaçao and Turkmenistan – which are planning to start the accession process. Among the on-going accessions, some countries have entered into the final phases of the accession negotiations, while others have resumed their processes.

**Third**, in parallel with WTO accessions, many of the acceding governments are also actively engaged in regional integration processes. Regional integration efforts have systemic implications on WTO Accessions, and vice versa. Taking into account the growing role of regional integration, the issue of the participation of regional integration entities in the WTO work, as well as interconnection of the WTO and regional arrangements should be further elaborated.

To conclude, I want to thank the Government of China and the WTO Secretariat for the efforts in organizing this Round Table.

Hope you enjoyed your time in Moscow.