

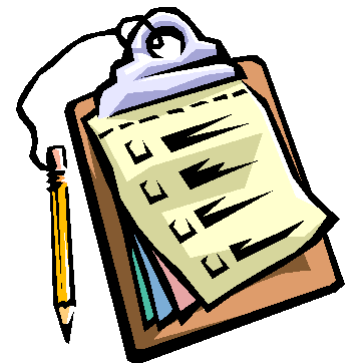


# Module 1: An Overview of the WTO Accession Process

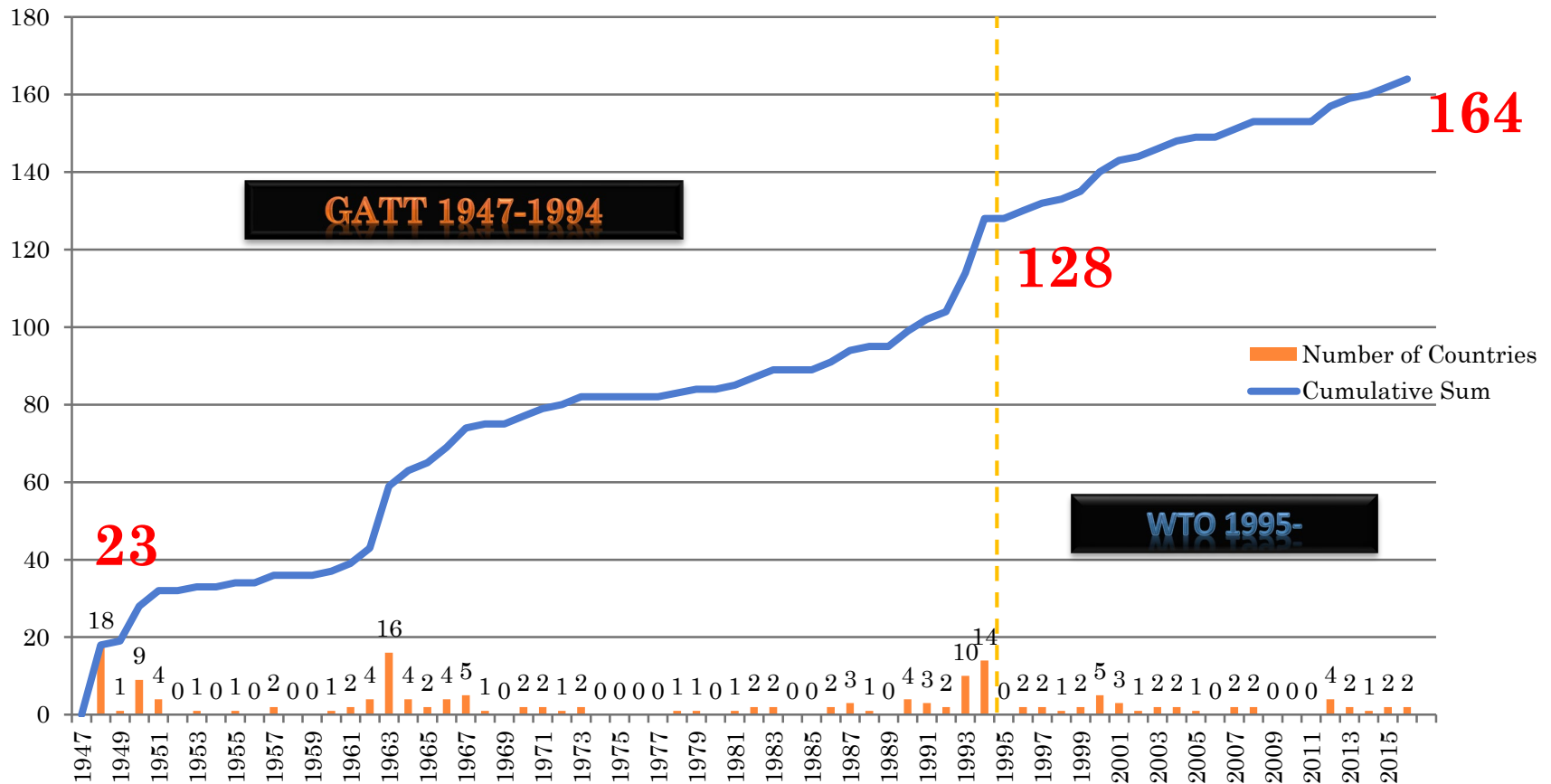
Dimitar Bratanov, Accessions Division, WTO

# Module Outline

- Overview
- The aim and rationale of WTO accession
- The legal basis of WTO accession
- The main steps of the WTO accession process
- The challenges of WTO accession: LDC Accessions and technical assistance

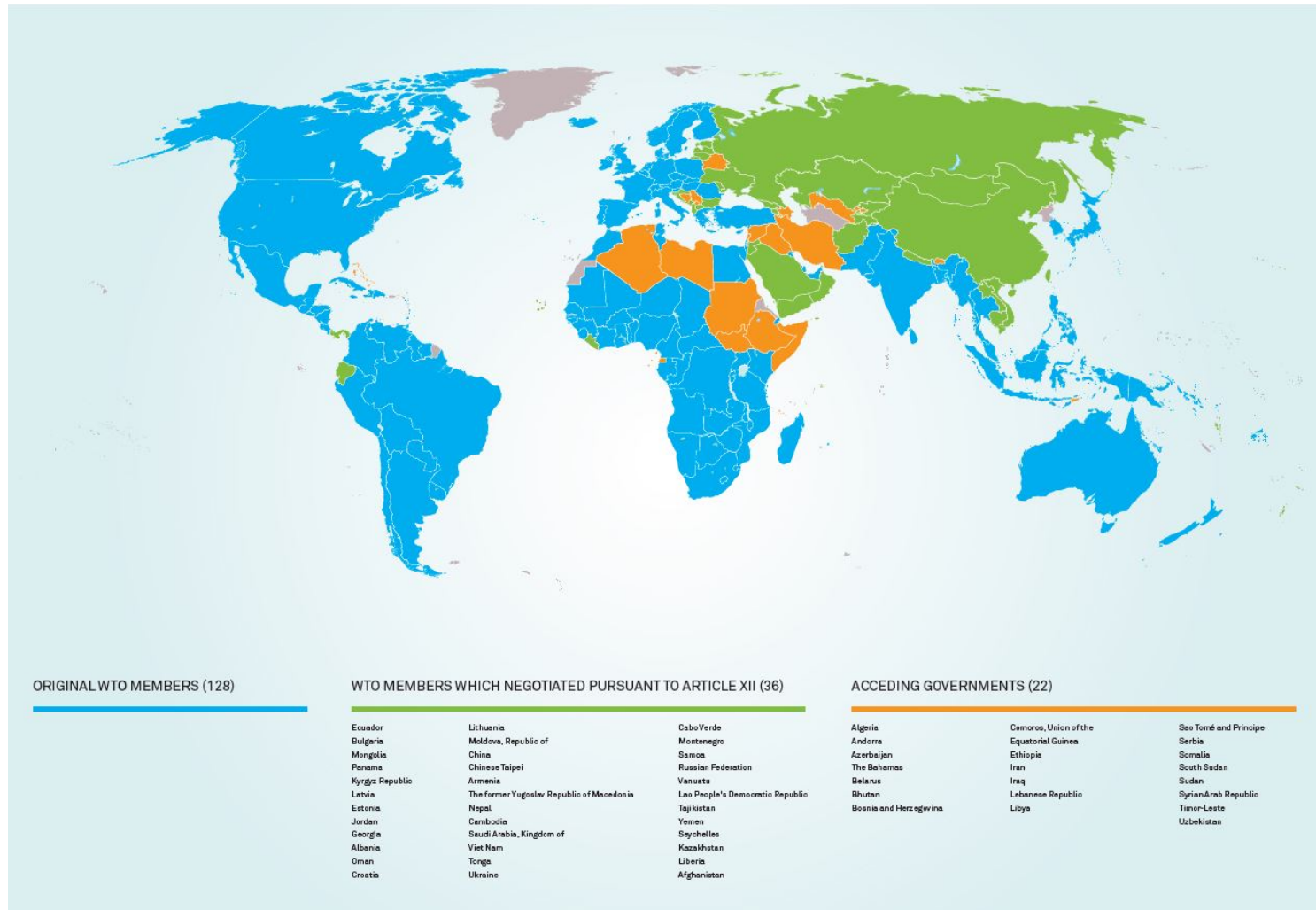


# Evolution of the Number of Members from GATT 1947 to Today



NOTE: There were 23 founding Contracting Parties (CPs) to GATT in 1947; however, only 18 of the CPs are included in this data set for the year 1948 due to countries pulling out of the Agreement before the establishment of the WTO. Thus, this data set strictly includes the 128 GATT signatories and the 36 Article XII Members.

# Map of WTO Members and Observers



# What has been done so far?

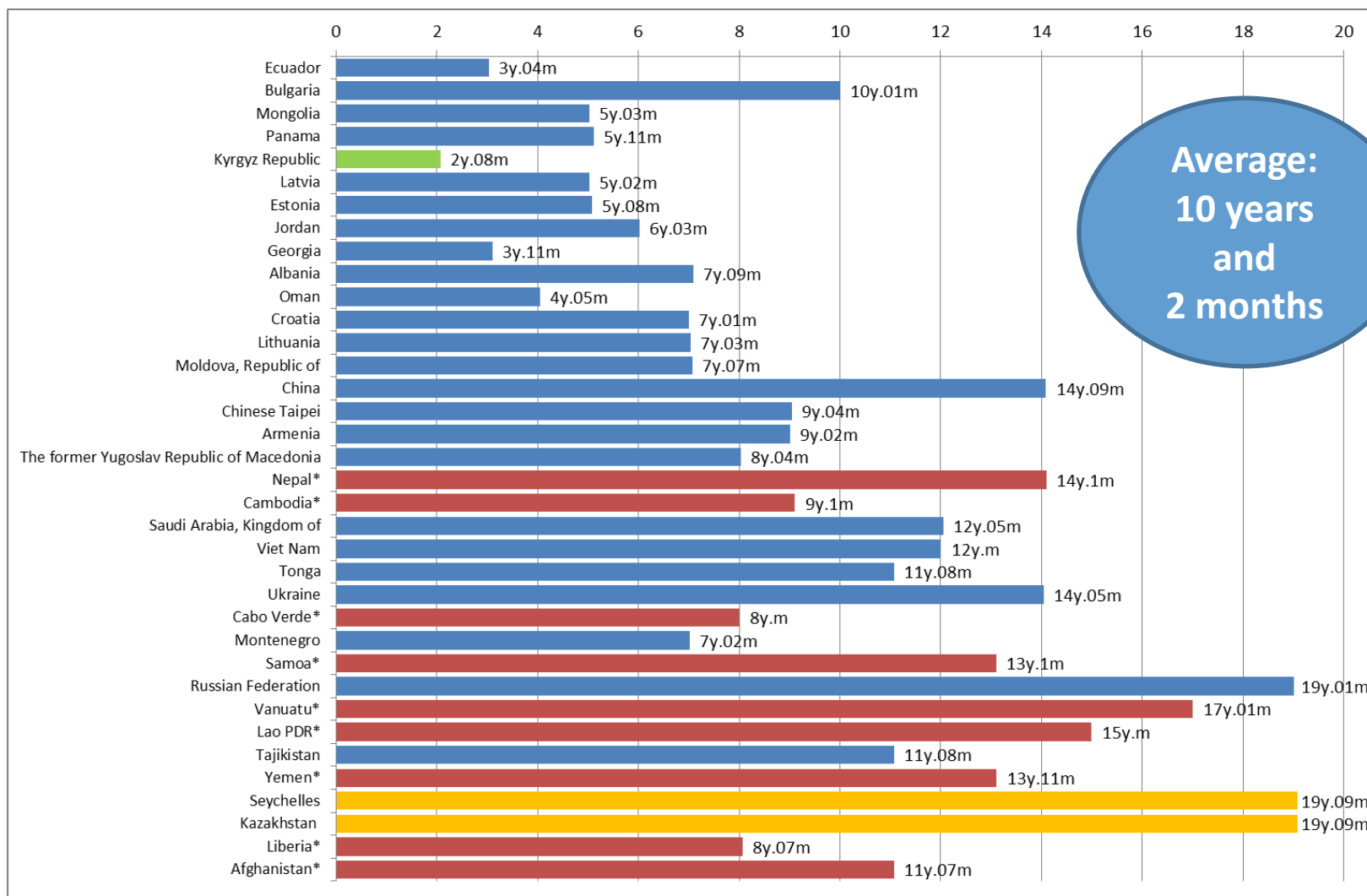
## *36 accessions completed to date*

(By Accession Date)





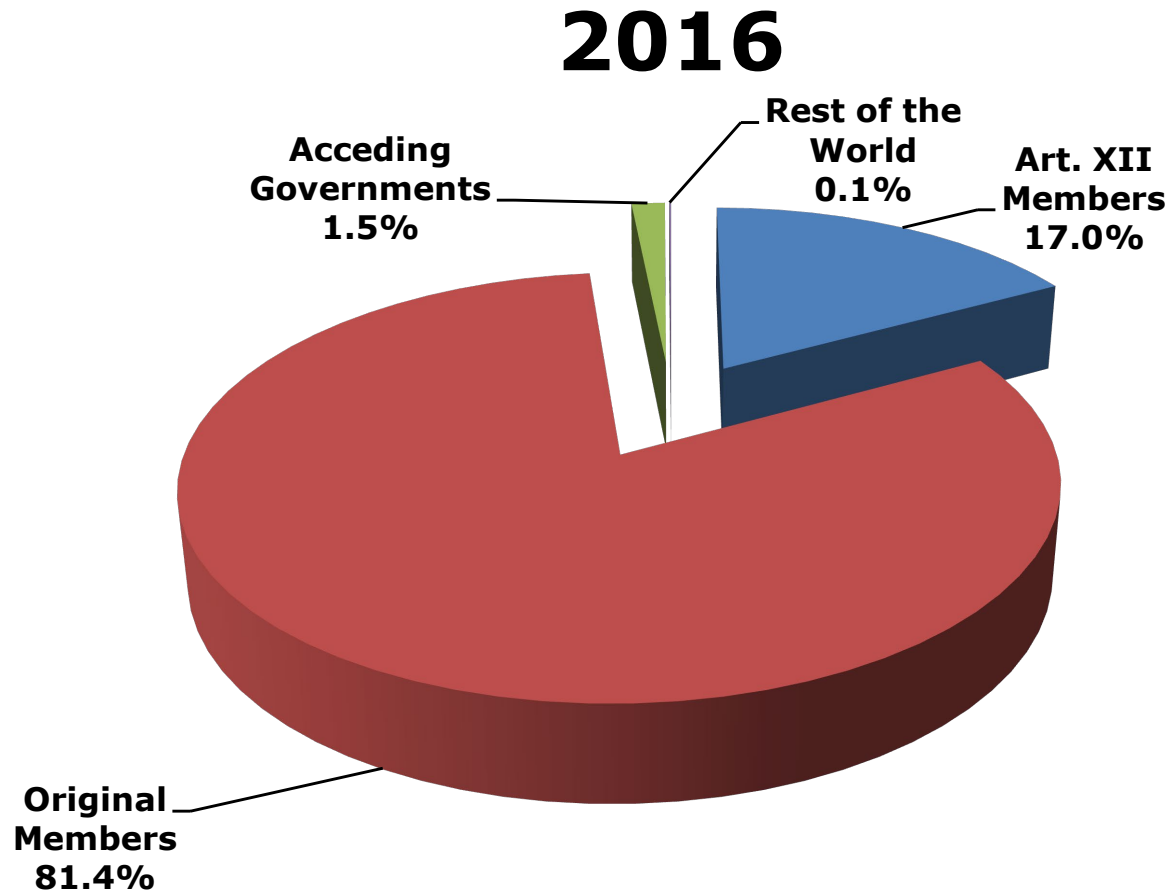
# Length of WTO accession process: From application to membership, in years



\* Acceded as LDC. On average, 9 LDC accessions took **12 years and 6 months**

# Accession Results

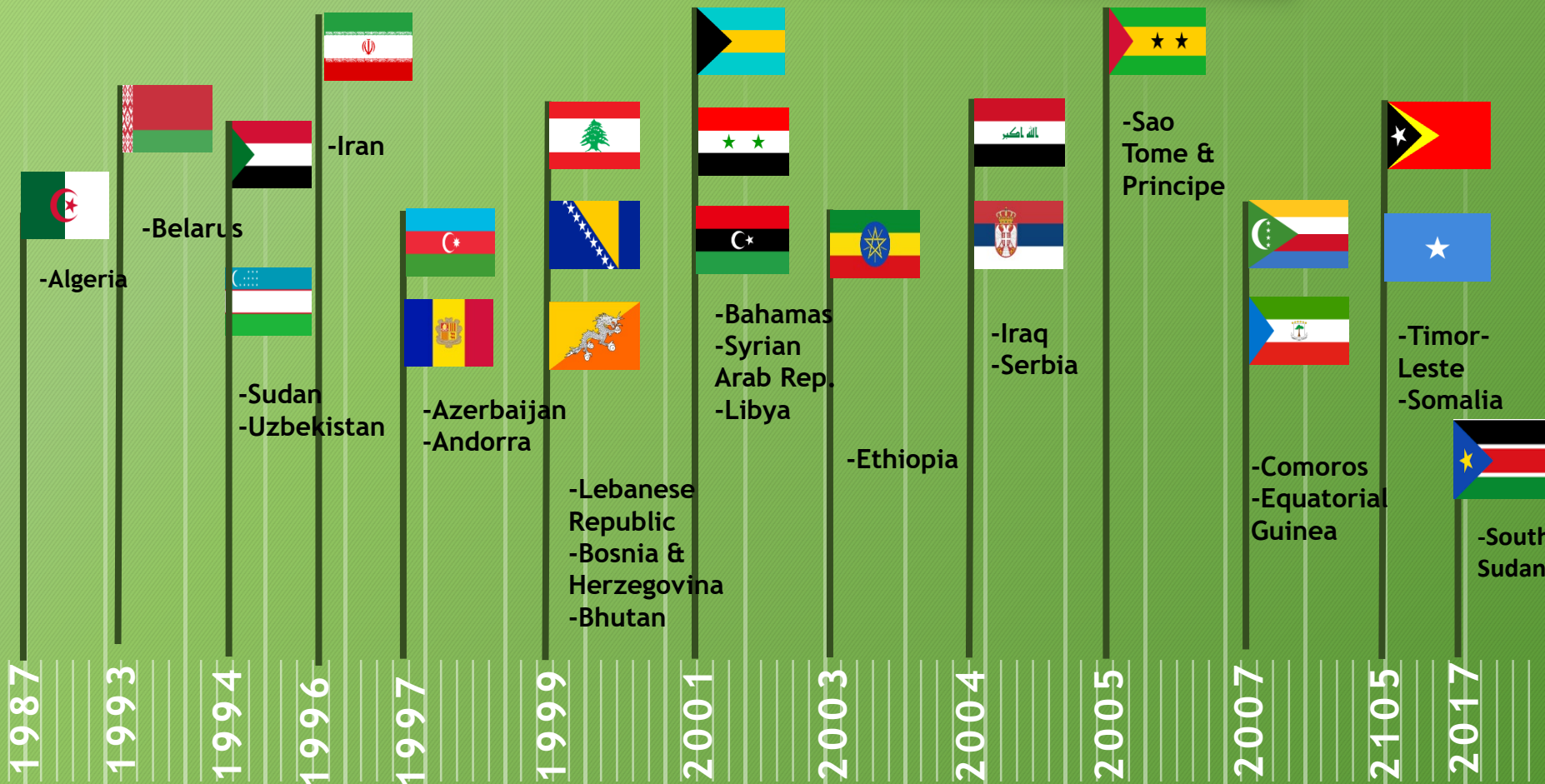
## Coverage: 98% of World Trade



# What remains to be done?

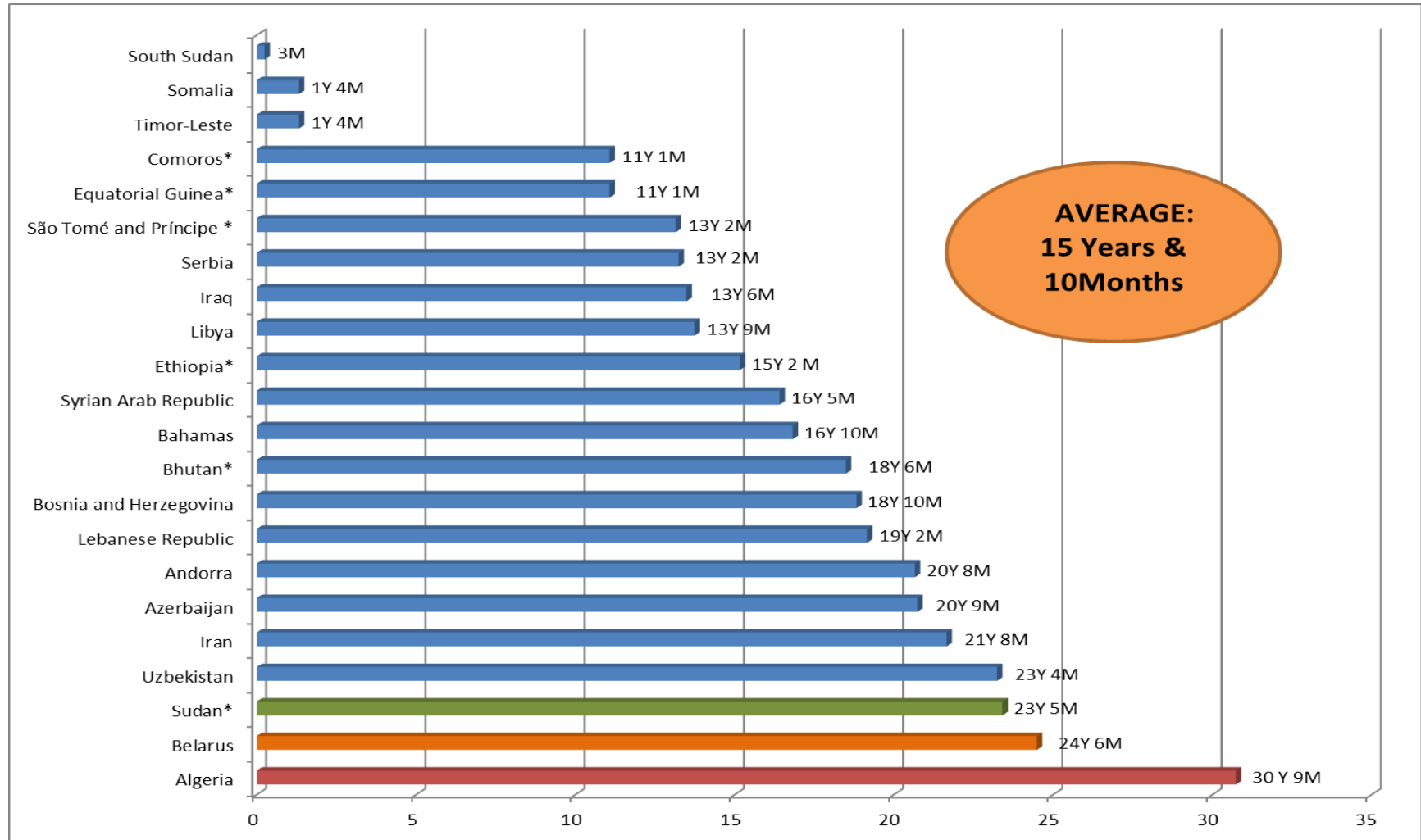
## 22 On-going Accessions and plus ....

(By Application Date)





# Length of WTO ongoing accessions: From date of application , in years



# Completed and On-Going Accessions Per Region



Africa	Europe/CIS	Asia Pacific	Middle East	America
3 (2)	16	11 (6)	4 (1)	2
<b>Cape Verde*, 2008</b> <b>Seychelles, 2015</b> <b>Liberia*, 2016</b>	Bulgaria, 1996 Kyrgyz Rep., 1998 Latvia, 1999 Estonia, 1999 Georgia, 2000 Albania, 2000 Croatia, 2000 Lithuania, 2001 Moldova, 2001 Armenia, 2003 FYR of Macedonia, 2003 Ukraine, 2008 Montenegro, 2012 Russian Fed. 2012 Tajikistan, 2013 Kazakhstan, 2015	Mongolia, 1997 China, 2001 Chinese Taipei, 2002 <b>Nepal*, 2004</b> <b>Cambodia*, 2004</b> Tonga, 2007 Viet Nam, 2007 <b>Samoa*, 2012</b> <b>Vanuatu*, 2012</b> <b>Lao PDR*, 2013</b> <b>Afghanistan*, 2016</b>	Jordan, 2000 Oman, 2000 Saudi Arabia 2005 <b>Yemen*, 2014</b>	Ecuador, 1996 Panama, 1997
9 (6)	6	2 (2)	4	1
Algeria, 1987 <b>Sudan*, 1994</b> <b>Ethiopia*, 2003</b> Libya, 2004 <b>Sao Tomé &amp; Príncipe*, 2005</b> <b>Comoros*, 2007</b> Equatorial Guinea, 2008 <b>Somalia*, 2016</b> <b>South Sudan, 2017</b>	Belarus, 1993 Uzbekistan, 1994 Azerbaijan, 1997 Andorra, 1997 Bosnia & Herzegovina, 1999 Serbia, 2005	<b>Bhutan*, 1999</b> <b>Timor-Leste*, 2016</b>	Lebanese Rep. , 1999 Iraq, 2004 I.R. of Iran, 2005 Syrian Arab Rep., 2010	Bahamas, 2001

# The Aim and Rationale of WTO Accession



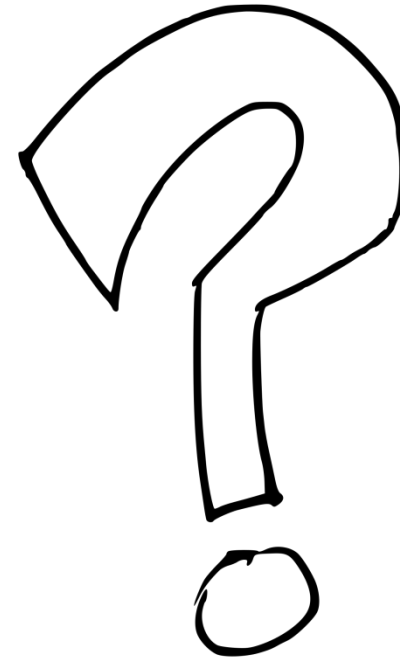
- Members wanting to join the WTO have to go through an accession process , involving negotiations between the applicant and WTO Members.
- The accession process refers to the specific procedures which have evolved over time building on GATT practices and have been developed by the Secretariat, in consultation with WTO Members, that Acceding Governments undergo to become a WTO Member. It is a Member-driven process.
- The accession process aims to ensure that an Acceding Government's legislation and practices will be compliant with WTO rules and that it becomes a full and effective player from its first day of membership.



# Rationale – Why join the WTO?



The WTO accession process involves learning and preparation for WTO membership. It benefits both the Acceding Government and the WTO.



## Question!

In your opinion, how can WTO membership benefit both the Acceding Government and the WTO?

# Rationale – Why join the WTO?



## Acceding Government



- ☐ Instituting domestic reforms
- ☐ Enhanced market access opportunities
- ☐ The assurance of predictable and transparent rules
- ☐ Access to the Dispute Settlement
- ☐ Participate in the shaping of global trade rules
- ☐ Promoting international cooperation

## WTO



- ☐ Achieve universality of the multilateral trading system
- ☐ Expand market access for the WTO membership
- ☐ Deepen international cooperation for trade
- ☐ Update and strengthen the existing rules systemically
- ☐ Facilitate smoother trade flows



# Legal Basis of WTO Accession



- The provision governing WTO accessions is **Article XII of the Agreement establishing the WTO (the Marrakesh Agreement)**.
  - It is based on Article XXIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which regulated GATT accessions.
  - Members that acceded to the WTO under Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement are sometimes referred to as “Article XII Members”.
- Article XII reads as follow:
  - 1. Any State or separate customs territory possessing full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and the other matters provided for in this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements may accede to this Agreement, on **terms to be agreed** between it and the WTO. Such accession shall apply to this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements annexed thereto.*
  - 2. Decisions on accession shall be taken by the Ministerial Conference. The **Ministerial Conference** shall approve the agreement on the terms of accession by a **two-thirds majority** of the Members of the WTO.*
  - 3. Accession to a Plurilateral Trade Agreement shall be governed by the provisions of that Agreement.*

# Legal Basis of WTO Accession



## States and Separate Customs Territories

International inter-governmental organizations are normally made up of Sovereign States. This is also the case for the WTO. However, Article XII opens up a possibility for trading partners who are not fully-fledged Sovereign States to accede.

Two conditions must be fulfilled:

1. They must be separate customs territories, and,
2. They must possess full autonomy in the conduct of their external commercial relations.

Separate customs territories have the same rights and obligations as any other Member.

### Question!

Can you think of any separate customs territories that acceded to the WTO?

# Legal Basis of WTO Accession



## Terms to be Agreed

- The aim of the drafters was to provide flexibility to ensure that the terms of each individual accession would provide for a balance between the specific needs of the Acceding Government concerned on the one hand and the credibility and viability of the rules-based WTO system on the other.
- **Each accession is, therefore, unique and negotiated on a case-by-case basis.** The terms of accession always depend on the legal and institutional framework of the Acceding Government and are different for each applicant.

### Note!

Although Article XII does not prescribe specific procedures to join the Organization, accession guidelines have been developed by the Secretariat in consultation with WTO Members, reflecting long-standing accession practices

# Legal Basis of WTO Accession



## The Ministerial Conference vs the General Council

Decisions on accession are taken by the **Ministerial Conference**. The Ministerial Conference is the decision-making body of the Organization. It carries out the functions of the WTO and takes actions necessary to this effect. The Ministerial Conference is composed of representatives of all the Members and meets at least once every two years.

Decisions on accession can also be taken by the **General Council** which carries out the functions of the WTO, and takes action in the intervals between meetings of the Ministerial Conference. The General Council is composed of representatives of the WTO Members.



# Legal Basis of WTO Accession

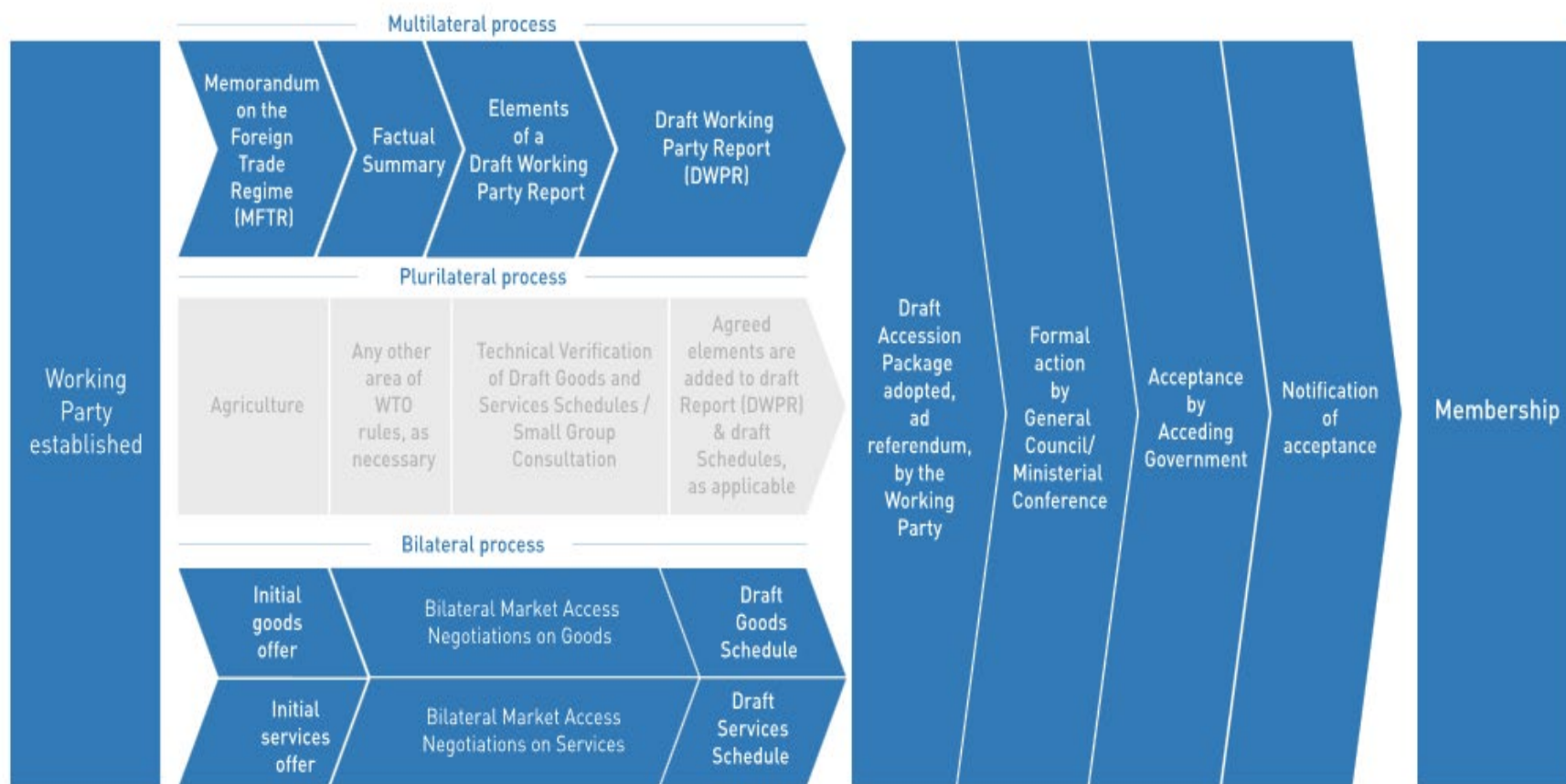


## Decision-making by consensus

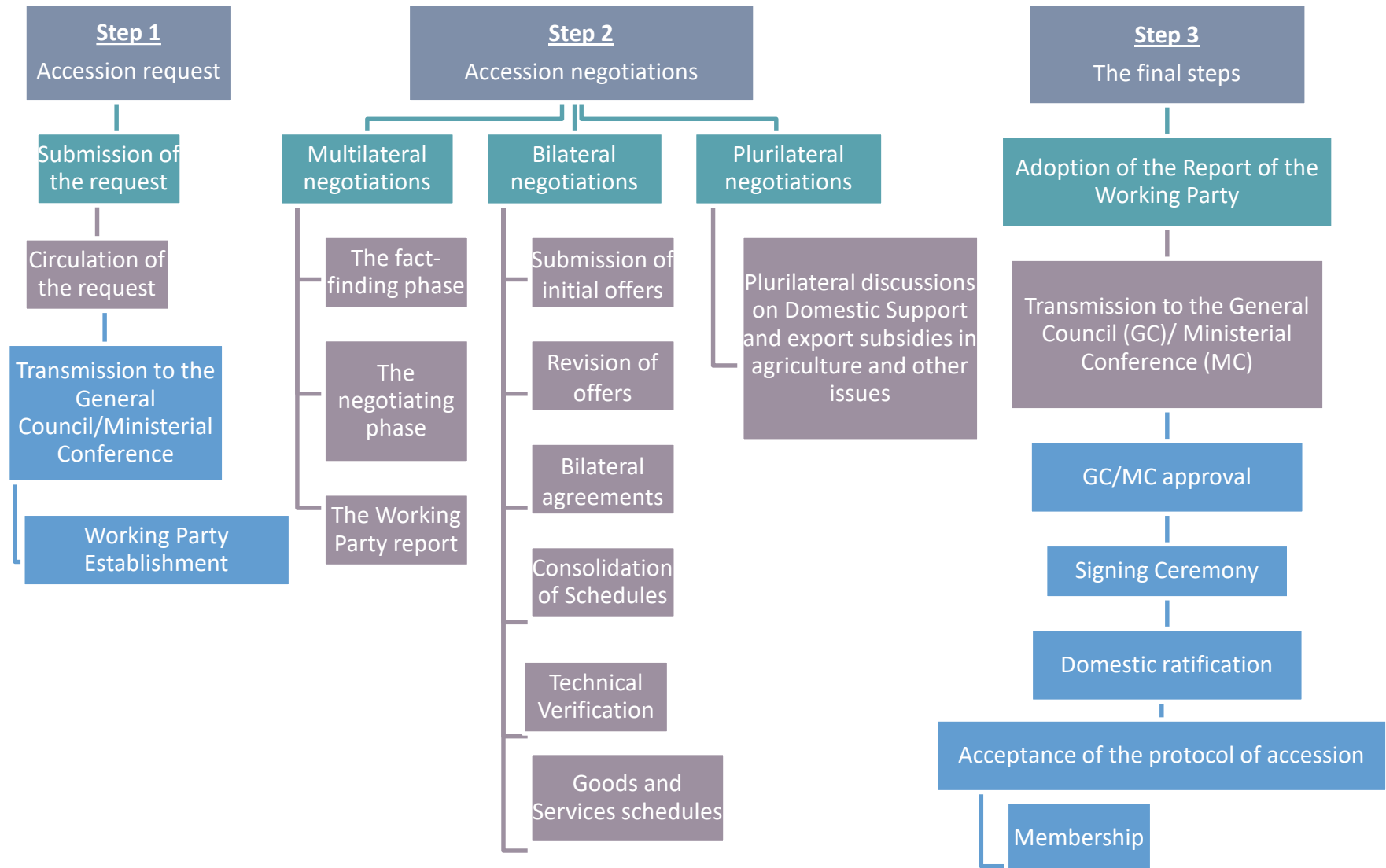
- Although Article XII refers to a two thirds majority vote, in practice, since 1995 decisions on accession have been taken by **consensus** in accordance with WTO practice (Article IX:1 of the Marrakesh Agreement).
- It is worth noting that paragraph 2 of Article XII refers to the final stage of the accession process, when the accession documents are adopted by the Ministerial Conference - or in-between two Ministerial Conferences by the General Council (Article IV:2 of the Marrakesh Agreement).
- The formulation of paragraphs 1 ("...on terms to be agreed [between the acceding government and WTO Membership]...") and 2 ("...the Ministerial Conference shall approve the agreement on the terms of accession...") of Article XII show that there must be "an agreement" on the terms of accession.



# Accession Process



# The Main Steps of the Accession Process



# Step 1: Accession Request

## Submission of the Request

- A government wishing to become a WTO Member should send a letter to the Director-General of the WTO expressing its wish to join the Organization.

*Example:*

*"I have the honour to inform you of the wish of [my government] to accede to the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation and to the multilateral trade agreements annexed thereto, in accordance with Article XII of the said Agreement."*



# Step 1: Accession Request

## Circulation of the Request

- The request letter for membership is received by the Director General and circulated to all WTO Members as the first official document of the WT/ACC series.

## Transmission of the Request

- The letter is transmitted to the Chairperson of the General Council for consideration at a future General Council meeting.



# Step 1: Accession Request

## Establishment of the Working Party

- The General Council considers the request for accession and establishes a Working Party to examine the application.
- An accession Working Party refers to a WTO body within which interested WTO Members multilaterally negotiate with an Acceding Government on the terms of accession of the latter to the WTO.
- An observer status is automatically granted to the Acceding Government upon the establishment of the Working Party on its accession.



**Establishment of the Working Party on the Accessions of Somalia and Timor-Leste**



# Step 1: Accession Request

## The Working Party

- The “terms of reference” of accession Working Parties define the scope of their work.
- All accession Working Parties have been given the same terms of reference: "to examine the governments' application and to submit to the General Council or Ministerial Conference recommendations which may include a Draft Protocol of accession".
- Chairpersons are appointed by the General Council. Accession Working Parties are chaired by WTO Members (generally, represented by their Geneva-based Ambassadors).
- Working Party membership is open to all interested WTO Members.



# Step 2: Accession Negotiations

**Step 2** is a core phase of the accession process. It includes various steps which are structured in three tracks of negotiations:

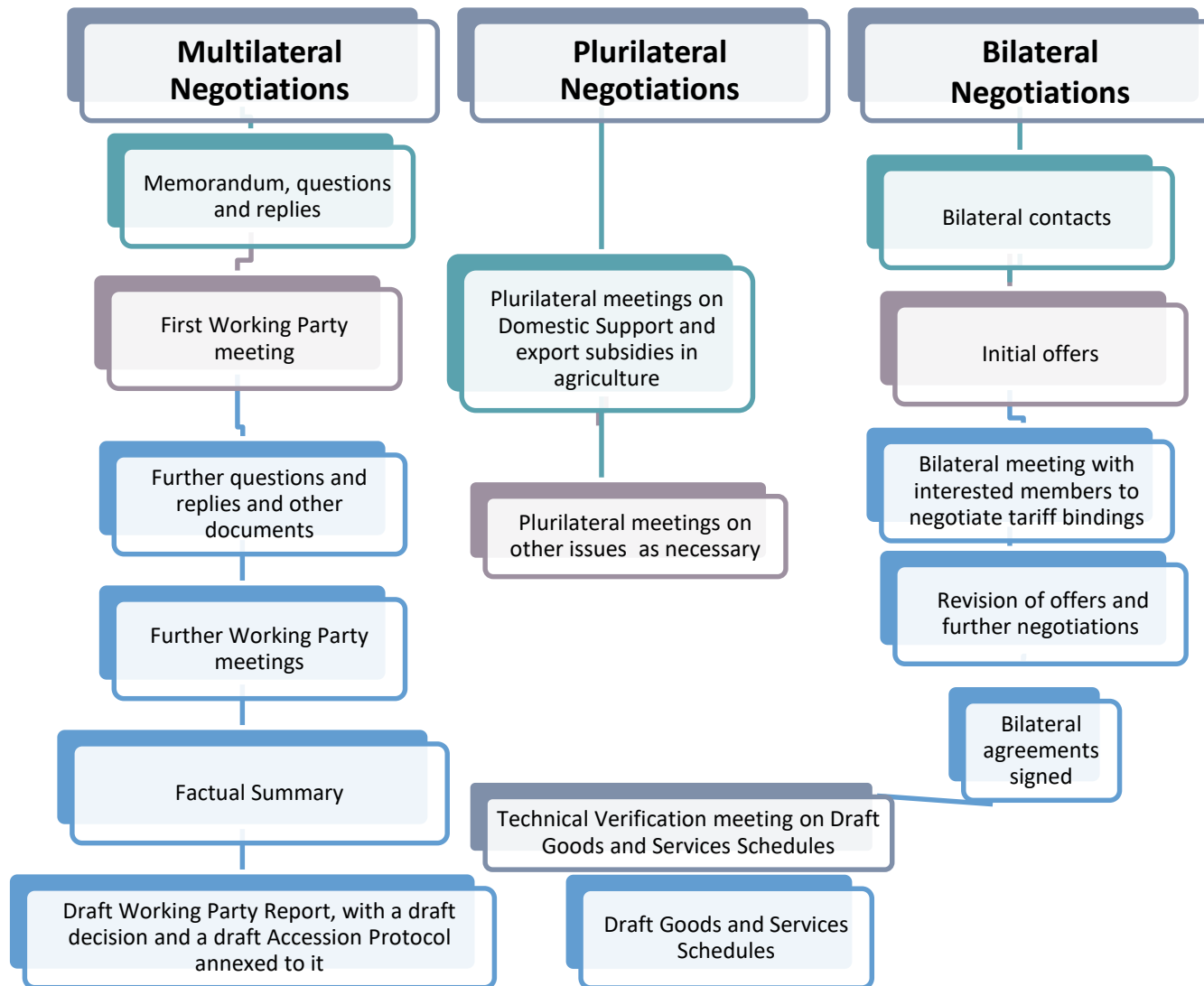
- **Multilateral negotiations;**
- **Bilateral negotiations; and,**
- **Plurilateral negotiations.**



These three negotiation tracks proceed more or less in parallel.

The accession procedures are outlined in document WT/ACC/22/Rev.1, which was developed by the Secretariat in close consultation with Members as a practical, non-binding guide.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

Multilateral negotiations take place within the framework of the Working Party. They aim at:

- (i) understanding the applicant's foreign trade regime; and,
- (ii) establishing the terms of entry to the WTO, ensuring the conformity of the applicant's laws and practices with WTO rules and disciplines.

These negotiations first involve the collection of factual information. They result in the negotiation of commitments on WTO rules.

*Multilateral negotiations can be structured into **three phases**:*

- (i) the fact-finding phase;*
- (ii) the negotiating phase; and,*
- (iii) the draft Working Party Report, i.e. commitments.*

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### **The Fact Finding Phase:**

The purpose of this phase is to collect information on the applicant's foreign trade regime, to identify any changes necessary to bring the Acceding Government's laws and practices into conformity with WTO rules, and to provide a basis for the negotiation of the applicant's terms of entry into the WTO.

During this phase, the applicant is requested to submit a number of documents to explain how its foreign trade regime works.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### **The Fact Finding Phase - documents to be submitted:**

**Submission of the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime:** Without this document, the negotiations cannot begin.

The format of the Memorandum can be found in Annex I of document WT/ACC/22/Rev.1. The Memorandum should cover the following areas:

1. Economic Policies and Foreign Trade;
2. Framework for Making and Enforcing Policies;
3. Policies Affecting Trade in Goods (import regulation, export regulation, internal policies affecting trade in goods, policies affecting trade in agricultural products);
4. Intellectual property rights;
5. Services;
6. Transparency; and,
7. Trade Agreements.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

**The Fact Finding Phase - documents to be submitted:**

*Submission of copies of legislation*

In addition to the Memorandum, the Acceding Government has to submit its **Legislative Action Plan (LAP)**, in which it provides a timeline for adoption of WTO-consistent legislation and regulations, together with **copies of legislation** in one of the official languages of the Organization (English, French, or Spanish).

The purpose is to enable Working Party Members to review the Acceding Government's laws and regulations, to establish if they are in compliance with WTO requirements. Acceding Governments are also encouraged to submit copies of draft legislation throughout the process.



# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### The Fact Finding Phase

#### *Circulation of the Memorandum*

The Memorandum is circulated to all WTO Members. Members seeking clarifications and additional information on the issues covered in the Memorandum can send their **questions** to the Secretariat. Members are usually given up to one month to submit their questions.

#### *First set of questions and replies*

These questions are then transmitted by the Secretariat to the Acceding Government for reply. The resulting **Questions and Replies** document which contains questions from all Members and the responses from the Acceding Government is then circulated to all WTO Members.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations

## Multilateral Negotiations

### The Fact Finding Phase

#### *First Working Party Meeting*

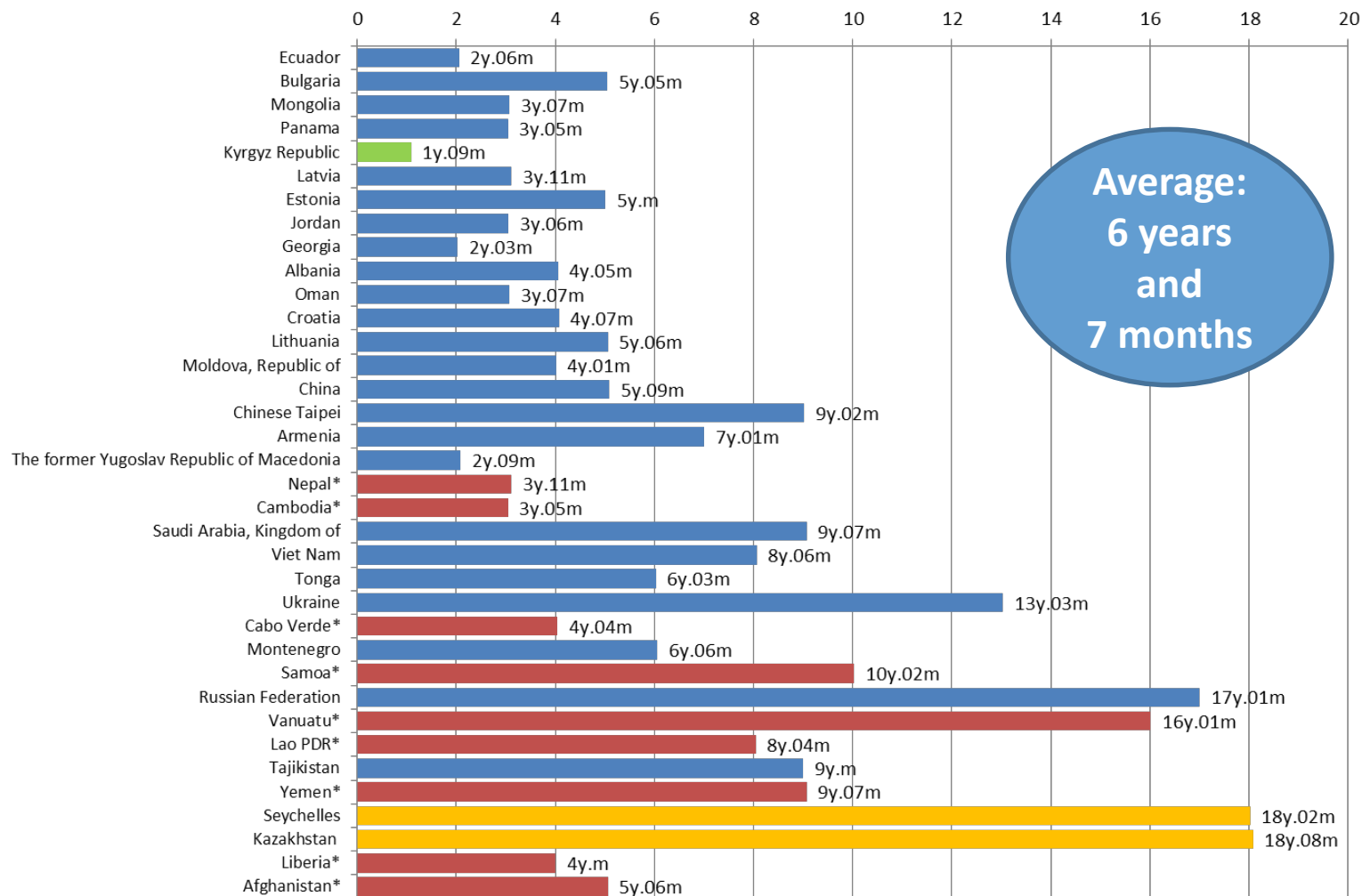
Once the first set of questions and replies has been circulated to WTO Members and the Chairperson of the Working Party has been appointed, the first Working Party meeting can take place.

Having welcomed the Acceding Government, Working Party Members begin the examination of the applicant's foreign trade regime on the basis of the Memorandum, the questions and replies (and other documents) submitted by the Acceding Government with a view to seeking any further clarifications that may be required.



Accession of Azerbaijan: Working Party Meeting

# Length of WTO Accession Process: From the 1st Working Party to Membership, in Years



\* Acceded as LDC. On average, 9 LDC accessions took **5 years and 4 months**

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### The Fact Finding Phase - documents to be submitted:

Other documents to be submitted during the accession process (ideally as early as possible in the process) include, *inter alia*:

- A Legislative Action Plan, accompanied by copies of legislation;
- If appropriate, action plans for the implementation of specific agreements (typically for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Intellectual Property (IP), and Customs Valuation);
- Information on domestic support and export subsidies in agriculture (WT/ACC/22/Add.1);
- Checklists on SPS and TBT (WT/ACC/22/Add.2);
- A Checklist on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property (WT/ACC/22/Add.2);
- A draft notification on industrial subsidies (Article 25, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures Agreement); and
- A questionnaire on State trading entities.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### The Negotiating Phase

#### *Additional questions and replies*

After each Working Party meeting, Members are invited to provide questions in writing to the Secretariat for transmission to the Acceding Government for reply.

#### *Further Working Party meetings*

When a new set of Questions and Replies and other requested accession documents are available, a Working Party meeting is organized to review the documentation.

#### *Preparation of Factual Summary*

At an appropriate stage of the process, the Secretariat is asked by the Working Party to prepare a Factual Summary of Points Raised which consolidates the information submitted by the acceding government and identifies the issues raised by Members. The structure of the Factual Summary is similar to the one of the Memorandum. The purpose of the Factual Summary is to facilitate and provide an overview of the discussions in the Working Party.

#### *Draft Working Party Report*

As negotiations advance and the contours of the final entry terms become clearer, the Secretariat is asked by the Working Party to prepare a Draft Working Party Report, based on the Factual Summary.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Multilateral Negotiations

### The Negotiating Phase

The structure of Draft Working Party Report is ***identical*** to that of the Factual Summary. In addition to the factual information contained in the Factual Summary, the draft Working Party Report also contains ***draft commitments*** to be agreed between the Acceding Government and Working Party Members. Commitment paragraphs contain the terms of entry of an Acceding Government to the WTO. These paragraphs are typically at the end of the respective sections of the Draft Working Party Report. They end with the sentence “the Working Party took note of this/these commitment(s)”.

Attached to the Draft Working Party Report are a draft Decision and a draft Protocol of Accession.

Sometimes Members request the Secretariat to prepare an intermediary document before moving to the Draft Working Party Report: the Elements of a Draft Working Party Report.

# Multilateral negotiations in numbers



No	Article XII Member	Membership Date	Number of Overall Legislation	Number of Questions responded
1	Ecuador	21/01/1996	69	111
2	Bulgaria	01/12/1996	26	276
3 <sup>ii</sup>	Mongolia	29/01/1997	33	146
4	Panama	06/09/1997	45	502
5	Kyrgyz Rep.	20/12/1998	155	952
6	Latvia	10/02/1999	77	396
7	Estonia	13/11/1999	77	490
8	Jordan	11/04/2000	52	929
9	Georgia	14/06/2000	53	512
10	Albania	08/09/2000	66	607
11	Oman	09/11/2000	55	808
12	Croatia	30/11/2000	111	919
13	Lithuania	31/05/2001	167	640
14	Moldova	26/07/2001	124	861
15	China	11/12/2001	2,300	441
16	Chinese Taipei	01/01/2002	96	960
17	Armenia	05/02/2003	87	434
18	FYR Macedonia	04/04/2003	132	829

No	Article XII Member	Membership Date	Number of Overall Legislation	Number of Questions responded
19	Nepal	23/04/2004	24	466
20	Cambodia	13/10/2004	85	460
21 <sup>iii</sup>	Saudi Arabia	11/12/2005	95	1218
22	Viet Nam	11/01/2007	184	3511
23	Tonga	27/07/2007	74	416
24	Ukraine	16/05/2008	385	3810
25	Cape Verde	23/07/2008	73	888
26	Montenegro	29/04/2012	114	1015
27	Samoa	10/05/2012	123	914
28	Russian Fed.	22/08/2012	529	2566
29	Vanuatu	24/08/2012	123	343
30	Lao PDR	02/02/2013	159	1224
31	Tajikistan	02/03/2013	137	1296
32	Yemen	26/06/2014	58	1164
33	Seychelles	26/04/2015	287	1043
34	Kazakhstan	30/11/2015	412	1900
35	Liberia	14/07/2016	102	264
36	Afghanistan	29/07/2016	75	773

Based on: (i) pieces of legislation submitted to the Secretariat; and (ii) replies to questions submitted on trade regime, except in AG dom. support



# Step 2: Accession Negotiations

## Bilateral Negotiations

Bilateral meetings are held with interested Working Party Members to negotiate market access commitments on goods and services (and to negotiate commitments on export duties). These negotiations usually take place on the fringes of Working Party meetings, at any time in Geneva or in the capitals. They proceed as follows:



# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Bilateral Negotiations

### *Submission of Initial Market Access Offers / Bilateral contacts*

Bilateral market access negotiations commence after the Acceding Government has submitted initial market access offers on goods and services to the Secretariat and these offers have been circulated by the Secretariat to Working Party Members. Such offers are generally submitted after the first Working Party meeting.

Based on these offers, any Member of the Working Party may request bilateral market access negotiations with the Acceding Government. The Acceding Government would be obliged to respond positively to such request(s) and to engage in market access negotiations with such Member(s) on goods, services or both.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Bilateral Negotiations

### *Revision of Market Access Offers*

As accession negotiations progress, the Acceding Government is invited to revise its market access offers, first multilaterally and, at a more advanced stage, sometimes bilaterally, taking into account of the accepted requests from Members. The revised offers are then discussed bilaterally with interested Members.

### *Bilateral Market Access Agreement*

Once an agreement has been reached with a Member (usually after several rounds of negotiations), a bilateral agreement is signed in three copies (one for each party and one for the Secretariat). It is important to deposit the signed agreement with the Secretariat.

An agreement normally contains a bilateral protocol with annexes on goods and/or services.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations

## Bilateral Negotiations

### *Bilateral Market Access Agreement*

While there is no standard format for a bilateral protocol, below is an example of a bilateral market access agreement for both goods and services may look like. Commitments on goods are normally contained in Attachment 1 to the protocol, while services commitments are contained in Attachment 2.

The Delegation of country 1 and the Delegation of country 2 (WTO Member) hereby inform the Director-General of the World Trade Organization that they have concluded their bilateral market access negotiations in the context of the accession of country 1 to the WTO.

They accordingly attach hereto the original of the list of concessions on goods which country 1 grants to country 2 (Attachment 1). Country 1 also grants to country 2 Initial Negotiating Rights for goods negotiated with country 2 as in the relevant column of the attached list of concession on goods at the rate which country 1 binds in its schedule.

The specific commitments on services that country 1 will grant to country 2 will be those contained in Attachment 2 hereto.

For country 2  
Head of Delegation

For country 1  
Head of the Delegation

Done in \_\_\_\_\_, date



Signing ceremony of bilateral market access Protocol between Belarus and Iceland, 11 May 2018

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations



## Bilateral Negotiations

### *Draft Goods and Services Schedules*

Once all bilateral agreements are concluded, signed and deposited with the Secretariat, the Secretariat, upon authorization from the Working Party, consolidates all bilateral agreements (which remain *confidential*) into Draft Consolidated Goods and Services Schedules.

The most liberal commitments are consolidated on MFN basis.

The results of the consolidation are reviewed by Signatories (i.e., those who have concluded bilateral market access agreements) at the Technical Verification Meeting chaired by the Secretariat. Once the Report of the Working Party is adopted, the Goods and Services Schedules will be annexed to it and form an integral part of the Accession Package.

# Step 2: Accession Negotiations

## Plurilateral Negotiations

To facilitate agreement at the Working Party level, certain issues of multilateral and systemic interest are discussed plurilaterally, i.e. in informal consultations with a number of interested Members. This is typically the case for discussion on the technical aspects of **domestic support and export subsidies in agriculture**, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, etc.

Plurilateral meetings are usually held on the fringes of the Working Party meetings.



# ACCESSION PACKAGE



Accession Package of the Russian Federation



1

- Decision
- Protocol

2

- Report of the Working Party

3

- Schedule of Concessions and Commitments on Goods

4

- Schedule of Specific Commitments on Services

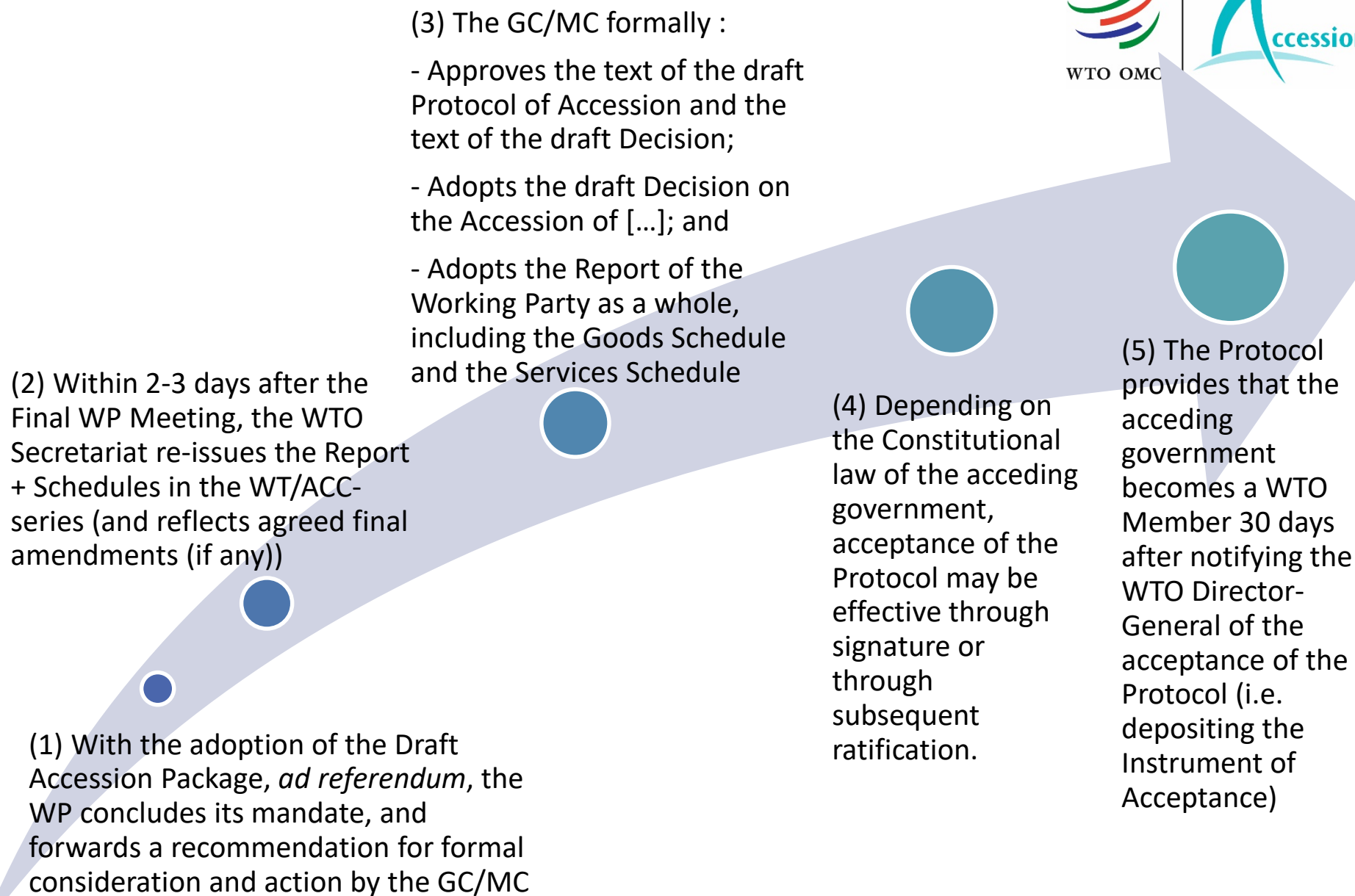


# Step 3: The Final Steps

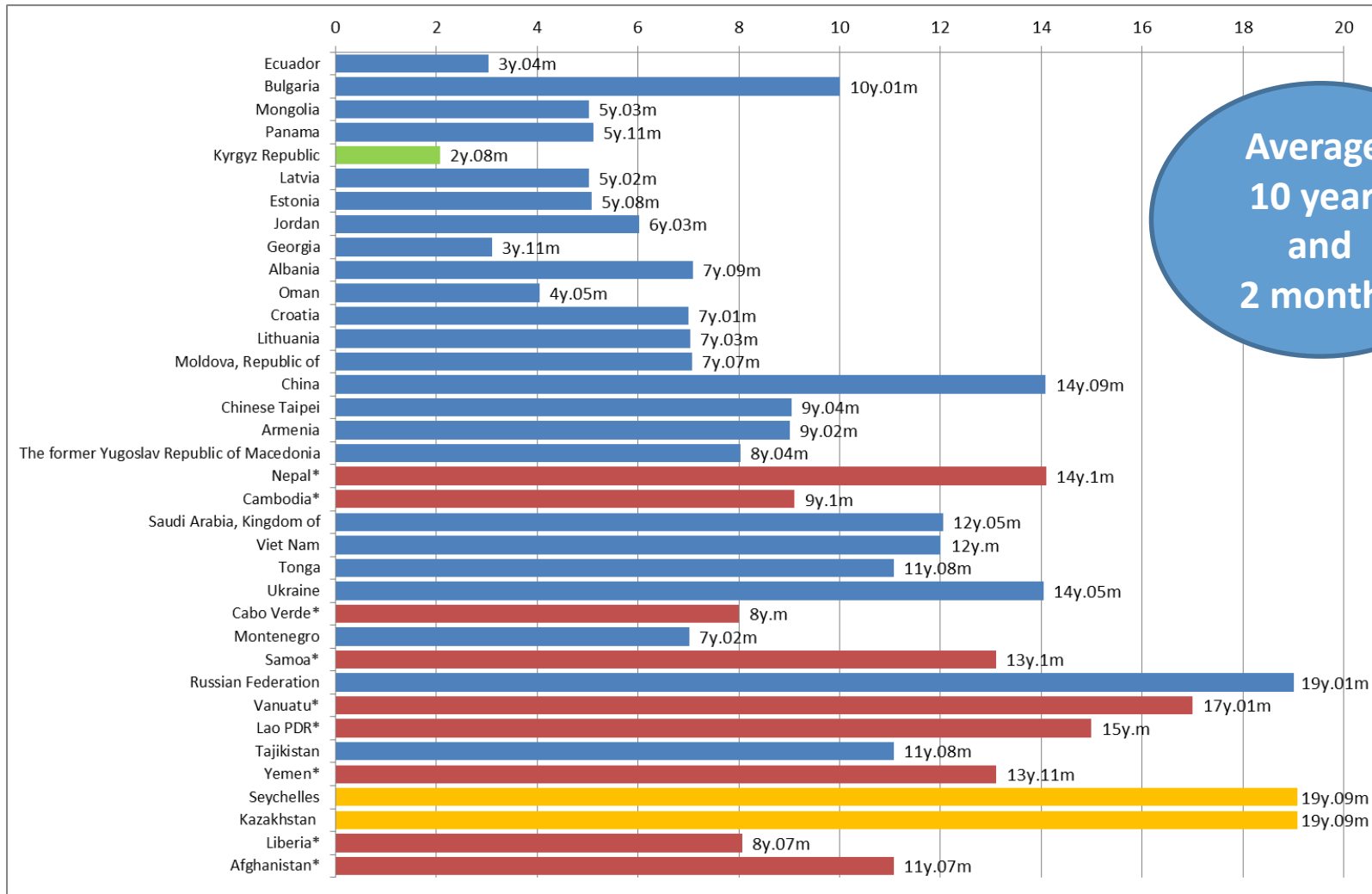


- Adoption of the Accession Package by the Working Party
- Transmission to the General Council/Ministerial Conference
- General Council/Ministerial Conference Approval
- Signing Ceremony of the Accession Protocol
- Domestic Ratification /Acceptance of the Protocol of Accession
- Membership

# After the Final Working Party Meeting...



# Challenges of WTO Accession (Length of WTO Accession in Years)



# Challenges of WTO Accession



Accession to the WTO is a long and demanding process. The length of time between application and actual accession has varied from 2 years and 10 months (the Kyrgyz Republic) to 19 years and 11 months (Seychelles).

On average, it has taken 10 years and 2 months for the 36 concluded accessions, and 12 years and 6 months for the 9 LDCs among them.

## Question!

In your opinion, why is WTO accession a long and demanding process?

# Challenges of WTO Accession



The length of an accession process depends, to a large extent, on *inter alia*:

- The scope of domestic reforms to be undertaken;
- The internal political situation and the priority given to the accession file by the Acceding Government;
- Coordination at the national level; and,
- The technical capacity of the Acceding Government.

# Completed and On-Going Accessions

## LDC Accessions in red



Africa	Europe/CIS	Asia Pacific	Middle East	America
3 (2)	16	11 (6)	4 (1)	2
<b>Cape Verde*</b> , 2008 Seychelles, 2015 <b>Liberia*</b> , 2016	Bulgaria, 1996 Kyrgyz Rep., 1998 Latvia, 1999 Estonia, 1999 Georgia, 2000 Albania, 2000 Croatia, 2000 Lithuania, 2001 Moldova, 2001 Armenia, 2003 FYR of Macedonia, 2003 Ukraine, 2008 Montenegro, 2012 Russian Fed. 2012 Tajikistan, 2013 Kazakhstan, 2015	Mongolia, 1997 China, 2001 Chinese Taipei, 2002 <b>Nepal*</b> , 2004 <b>Cambodia*</b> , 2004 Tonga, 2007 Viet Nam, 2007 <b>Samoa*</b> , 2012 <b>Vanuatu*</b> , 2012 <b>Lao PDR*</b> , 2013 <b>Afghanistan*</b> , 2016	Jordan, 2000 Oman, 2000 Saudi Arabia 2005 <b>Yemen*</b> , 2014	Ecuador, 1996 Panama, 1997
9 (6)	6	2 (2)	4	1
Algeria, 1987 <b>Sudan*</b> , 1994 <b>Ethiopia*</b> , 2003 Libya, 2004 <b>Sao Tomé &amp; Príncipe*</b> , 2005 <b>Comoros*</b> , 2007 Equatorial Guinea, 2008 <b>Somalia*</b> , 2016 <b>South Sudan</b> , 2017	Belarus, 1993 Uzbekistan, 1994 Azerbaijan, 1997 Andorra, 1997 Bosnia & Herzegovina, 1999 Serbia, 2005	<b>Bhutan*</b> , 1999 <b>Timor-Leste*</b> , 2016	Lebanese Rep. , 1999 Iraq, 2004 I.R. of Iran, 2005 Syrian Arab Rep., 2010	Bahamas, 2001

# Policy Framework for LDC Accessions



Background to Doha 2001: No LDCs had joined the WTO since 1995

- ❖ 2001 Doha Mandate to ***“facilitate and accelerate negotiations with acceding LDCs”*** – paragraph 42 of Doha Ministerial Declaration
- ❖ **2002 General Council Guidelines for LDCs’ Accessions (WT/L/508)**
  - Market Access, WTO Rules, Process, TRTA and CB.
- ❖ **2012 GC Decision to *“strengthen, streamline and operationalize” the 2002 Guidelines* (WT/L/508/Add.1)**
  - Benchmarks on market access on Goods and Services
  - Transparency in accession negotiations
  - “Facilitation” by Chairs of SCLDC & Accession Working Parties
  - Special and differential treatment & transition periods
  - Technical assistance and capacity building



# Technical Assistance & Capacity Building



**5th China Round Table, Siem Reap, Cambodia**  
20-23 March 2017



**Training Course on Goods Schedules for WTO Accession, Geneva, Switzerland**  
27-31 March 2017



**Forum on WTO accessions - Accession-related technical assistance and capacity-building**  
13 July 2017



**Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Greater Horn Africa, Nairobi, Kenya**  
28-31 August 2017



**Public Forum SESSION 44: Accessions Behind the Headlines: Integration of Arab Countries into the Global Economy**  
27 September 2017



**81st Session of the Sub-Committee on LDCs State of Play in the accession Working Parties and WTO post-accession support**  
3 October 2017

# Accession-Related Technical Assistance



Technical assistance plays a key role in helping Acceding Governments face the challenges of the accession process.

The WTO Secretariat has a biennial Technical Assistance and Training Plan which provides support for Acceding Governments as one of its overarching objectives. This Plan grants priority attention to acceding Least-developed countries (LDCs).



# Accession-Related Technical Assistance



Technical Assistance and Capacity building activities include *inter-alia*:

- National seminars;
- Sessions on accessions in advanced trade policy courses, regional courses and introductory courses for LDCs;
- Workshops;
- Technical missions;
- Establishment/upgrade of WTO reference centres;
- E-learning courses and e-lecture series;
- Outreach dialogue with WTO groupings;
- Participation in conferences; and,
- Customized briefings on accessions for delegations (including non-residents in Geneva) are also provided by the Secretariat.

# China LDCs' and Accessions Programme



The China "Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Accessions Programme" (the China Programme) was established by the Government of China and the WTO on 14 July 2011.

The China Programme is aimed at strengthening LDCs' participation in the WTO and assisting LDCs acceding to the WTO. It is an accession-specific focused programme that takes account of the concerns and priorities of LDCs.

The China Programme comprises five pillars:

- (i) The WTO Accessions Internship Programme;
- (ii) WTO Accessions Round Table Meeting process;
- (iii) LDCs' participation in WTO meetings;
- (iv) South-South dialogue on LDCs and development; and,
- (v) LDCs' Trade Policy Review follow-up workshops.

# End of Module 1!

**Question!**

What is your take-away from this module?