



WTO Accessions Newsletter

...safeguarding and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system

IGA-AGENDA:

The 2nd meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2015 was held yesterday, 26 February. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. IGA Members were briefed on: (i) LDCs' accessions; (ii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (iii) accession WPs under "maintenance"; (iv) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach; and, (v) the consolidation and expansion of the rules-based Multilateral Trading System from Members' work on accessions, since 1995. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2015 (annexed).



Accession of Liberia - Meetings with the Secretariat, 29-30 January 2015
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

LDCs' ACCESSIONS

Liberia: The accession negotiations of Liberia are in speed gear. The Negotiating Team, led by H.E. Minister Axel Addy, was in Geneva this week; and, was working, intensively, with the Secretariat to produce the first comprehensive Draft of Liberia's Working Party Report (DWPR). On market access, Liberia was engaged with the five Members that had expressed an interest in bilateral market access negotiations. Monrovia was committed to finalizing all technical work before the Summer break. Members reaffirmed their support to work with Liberia to conclude its accession by MC10. The delegation of Liberia was grateful to Members for their 360-degree support, and expressed particular appreciation to the European Union and the United States for the support they provided through Liberia's recent crisis. The IGA took note of the calendar for the next cycle of WP meetings, which would include a Plurilateral meeting on Agriculture and a formal WP meeting, envisaged to take place at the end of March.

ACCESSIONS - TOOLBOX

- > Click here for a list of current [Accession Working Parties](#) and [Accession Working Party Chairpersons](#)
- > Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings (ECAM)
- > Secretariat Accessions Team
- > [WTO Director-General Annual Reports on Accessions](#)
- > Find all Article XII Members' specific accession commitments and related information provided in the Working Party Reports and Accession Protocols - in the [Accession Commitments Database \(ACDB\)](#)
- > [Handbook on Accessions to the WTO](#)
- > WTO Accessions Internship - "[China Programme](#)"
- > [Accession-Related Technical Assistance Activities](#)
- > For all official (de-restricted) documents relating to the accession processes of Article XII Members, click [here](#)
- > Accession Portal on the WTO Website ([En](#), [Fr](#), [Es](#))
- > All earlier [WTO Accessions Newsletters](#) are available on the Accession Portal of the WTO website, in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- > For enquiries related to the contents of the WTO Accessions Newsletter, send an e-mail to: Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org

Afghanistan: There had been no recent accession-related developments. Kabul was in the process of drafting, adopting and enacting the remaining legislation which it was required to enact prior to its WTO membership. Kabul would contact the Secretariat regarding the date for the next WP meeting; envisaged as the final. Working Party Members would be consulted on any substantive developments on the Draft Accession Package of Afghanistan prior to the convening of the next meeting of the Working Party.



*Meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions, 26 February 2015
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES (WP) IN FOCUS

Kazakhstan: The Secretariat reported this accession was in an endgame mode. Negotiations were taking place daily. There was a membership-wide commitment to conclude this accession over the next few weeks. The Chief Negotiator of Kazakhstan, H.E. Minister Zhanar Aitzhanova, was in Geneva this week, for consultations with Members on the remaining outstanding issues. The Delegation reiterated its commitment to finalize outstanding questions as soon as possible. The Secretariat also reported to Members that it awaited the submission of the final inputs from Astana on the specific questions remaining, on which decisions by Astana were awaited, on Agriculture domestic support and market access, Tariff Adjustment and SPS. Resolving these questions were a pre-condition for circulating the Draft Accession Package for review by Members of the Working Party. The Secretariat informed the IGA that prior to convening the final meeting of the Working Party, a Technical Verification Meeting of the Draft Goods Schedule would be convened for Signatory Members, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. The Draft Accession Package would be circulated with due lead-time, so as to allow sufficient time for Members' review before the next WP Meeting.

Serbia: Belgrade was in regular contact with the Secretariat, but was yet to indicate of how it envisaged the Next Steps.

MAINTENANCE WORK

The Secretariat reported on the technical state-of-play on several active accessions:

Azerbaijan: The next cycle of WP meetings was scheduled for the first week of March. The meetings would include the Agriculture Plurilateral (5 March) and the 12th WP Meeting (6 March). The documents for the

meetings had been circulated. The circulated documents included: the revised Draft Working Party Report (DWPR); Revised Goods and Services offers; Revised Agriculture Supporting Tables; Replies to Members' Questions; Customs Valuation Questionnaire; Subsidies Checklist; updated Legislative Action Plan (LAP); and, the accompanying legislation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Sarajevo had signaled that it was working towards closing its WTO accession negotiations. Members and the Secretariat stood ready to assist Sarajevo to cross the finish line. The ball was in the court of Sarajevo.

Bahamas: The recently-appointed Minister of Financial Services of The Bahamas, The Honourable Hope Strachan, intended to re-engage on WTO accession. Nassau was also planning to notify its VAT Act to the WP.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Members were informed that preparatory work was underway on the Second Global Seminar on WTO Accessions. The Seminar was planned to take place as part of the events to mark the 20th Anniversary of the WTO, from 28 to 30 September. The three-part programme comprised: (a) five high-level panels; (b) a special session to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Accession of Saudi Arabia to the WTO; and, (c) the launch, by WTO Director-General Azevêdo, of the Accessions Book: "WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons for the WTO at Twenty", on 30 September. The Secretariat would continue to update Members on the progress in preparing for the Seminar.

Members were also informed about the progress in the preparation of the 3rd and 4th China Round Tables. Tajikistan had confirmed its readiness to host the 3rd China Roundtable, thematically focused on post-accession, before the Summer. The 4th China Roundtable would be organized, preparatory for MC10, in Nairobi. It would focus on the African Perspective of the Multilateral Trading System. Members would be updated.

EVOLUTION OF THE RULES-BASED SYSTEM: CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION FROM ACCESSIONS

The Director Accessions invited the IGA Members to visit the Twentieth Anniversary Accessions Exhibition, which showcased both the sheer increase in documentation volume, complexity of Accession Packages and, the qualitative systemic contributions to clarify, consolidate and update WTO rules plus significant improvements in MFN market access. These points had been elaborated in the Accessions Book. Director Accessions reported that, "since 1995, on accessions, the WTO had not stood still: it had delivered on accessions and other fronts, although there was scope for more to be done in other areas, including negotiations". The 20th Anniversary of the WTO was seen as a year for comprehensive reflection on the evolution of the rules-based Multilateral Trading System.

Finally, Members were informed that the Secretariat maintained its practice on round-the-year contacts with individual members and dialogue with WTO groupings to explain the work of the WTO on accessions, results registered, challenged faced and respond to any concerns that Members may have.



*Meeting with Ambassador Marcos GALVÃO (Brazil) -
Geneva, 18 February 2015*

ANNEX

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)¹

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room
Thursday, 5 March 2015	Azerbaijan	Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (PM)	Convening fax dated 18/02/15 refers	D
Friday, 6 March 2015	Azerbaijan	12 th Working Party Meeting (AM)	WTO/AIR/ACC/1 refers	D
[Friday, 20 March 2015]	IGA	3 rd 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	S2
[Friday, 20 March 2015]	Liberia	Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (11:00-13:00)	Convening Notice pending	S1
[Friday, 20 March 2015]	Liberia	2 nd Working Party Meeting (PM)	Convening Notice pending	S1
[TBC – Final TVM]	Kazakhstan	Ongoing Technical Verification Meeting on Goods Schedule with Signatory Members (AM/PM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Kazakhstan	20 th and Final Working Party Meeting (AM/PM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to: accessions@wto.org

¹ Dates are suggested to assist planning by Members, Acceding Governments and the Secretariat. However, listed meetings are not automatic and will only go ahead on the basis of inputs from Acceding Governments, received with sufficient time for review by Members, normally a period of at least four weeks. Scheduling and confirmation of meetings also take account of the distribution of meetings in any particular period, and hence, the capacity of Members and the Secretariat alike to cope.