



WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

First Informal Group on Accessions (IGA), 28 January 2016

Agenda:

- + Completed accessions: **Kazakhstan, Liberia and Afghanistan**
- + Progress Report on Accessions in 2016 Focus: **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus and The Bahamas**
- + Accession Working Parties State-of-Play: **Azerbaijan, Iran, Lebanon and Sudan**
- + Applications for Accession: **Somalia**.
- + Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities
Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Director of the Accessions Division)

Completed accessions

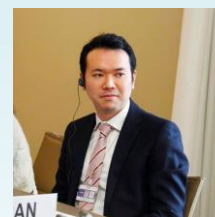
Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan became the 162nd Member of the WTO on 30 November 2015. IGA Members welcomed Kazakhstan as the new IGA participant.

Liberia and Afghanistan: In Nairobi, the 10th Ministerial Conference took formal action on the Accession Packages of Liberia and Afghanistan, on 16 and 17 December 2015, respectively. Both Governments have initiated their respective domestic ratification procedures. They shall become WTO Members 30 days after depositing their ratification instruments with the Director-General.

The Director Accessions conveyed to Members in the IGA the appreciation of the Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for results produced in 2015. The Director-General urged Members to sustain the habit of "delivery" and an orientation to results. In 2016, in support of the work of Members in this area, the Secretariat shall continue to use WTO accessions to: (i) contribute to growth in the global economy (through improvements in market access); (ii) strengthening the rules; (iii) providing Acceding Governments with an instrument for domestic policy, institutional and structural reforms; and, (iv) fostering regional and international cooperation.

Retirements and rotations

The IGA bid farewell to Mr Shunsuke Sakugawa (Japan)



and paid homage to Ms Cecilia Klein (retired, United States).



ACCESSIONS TOOLBOX

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

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Progress Report on Accessions in 2016 Focus

Bosnia and Herzegovina: H.E. Ambassador Rajmund Kiss (Hungary), the new Chairperson of the Working Party on the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, participated to report on the recent developments in this accession and discuss next steps. He reported that recently, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at its 37th Session of the Council of Ministers on 30 December 2015, had decided to strive to conclude its accession over the next few months. The High-level commitment of Sarajevo had emerged to re-start its accession and advance to rapid conclusion. This decision had provided the mandate, authority and impetus required to re-activate this accession and seek its conclusion. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo was also engaged. He had met with H.E. Ambassador Lucija Ljubic-Lepine, the new Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UNOG. The Director-General had communicated to Sarajevo that, as long as essential decisions are taken in Sarajevo with matching high-level political commitment, the WTO membership stood ready to help Bosnia and Herzegovina to conclude its accession.

H.E. Ambassador Rajmund Kiss had held comprehensive consultations with H.E. Ambassador Lucija Ljubic-Lepine. With the Secretariat Team, he had held an intensive technical review of the current state-of-play on the components of the emergent Draft Accession Package. The Secretariat's assessment was that this accession was at an advanced stage, although there were outstanding questions to be addressed on rules and market access negotiations. The draft Report of the Working Party (DWPR) was advancing to technical maturity, but with several questions remained to be resolved. The Chairman outlined, broadly, lines for action over the next few months. He would task the Secretariat to work with him, Members and Sarajevo to finalize the DWPR, and circulate it to Members no later than mid-April. On legislation, Members requested for an updated Legislative Action Plan (LAP). The Chairman informed Members that the Tariff Negotiating Team would be present in Geneva in the month of March to conclude outstanding bilateral market access negotiations. Members were encouraged to work with Sarajevo to establish compromise outcomes no later than the end of April. Members that intervened welcomed the information that Sarajevo would revert with updated offers that would offer scope for compromise to conclude the outstanding bilaterals. Members noted that they stood ready to facilitate the conclusion of the remaining bilaterals as rapidly as possible. The Chairman appealed to all Members to provide support to the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina by concluding the remaining bilaterals, as efficiently and rapidly as possible, mindful of the challenges faced by individual economies in the current state-of-the global economy. On current planning, the Chairman informed Members that the objective, to the extent possible and subject to substantive progress, was to mandate the Secretariat to proceed with the consolidation of the results of bilaterals by late spring.

A stock-taking meeting of the Working Party was envisaged for early May. The Chairperson would sustain consultations with Members, Ambassador Ljubic-Lepine and, continue to stand advised by the Secretariat. The Chairperson underlined that he would continue to count on the support of Members which would be critical for a 2016 completion of this accession. The accession would contribute to the overall support being provided by the international community to the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in establishing a foundation for its national economic prosperity, enhancing national security, and the wider stability of the South-Eastern European region. IGA Members expressed support for the plans as outlined by the Chairman of the Working Party and underscored their support for the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



IGA meeting – 28 January 2016



Accession of The Bahamas: Meeting with H.E. Ms Cynthia Vera Hope Strachan, Minister of Financial Services and Ambassador Rhoda Jackson, Nairobi, Kenya, 18 December 2015

The Bahamas: On the margins of MC10, the Director Accessions met with the Hon. Hope Strachan, Minister of Financial Services of The Bahamas and H.E. Ambassador Rhoda Jackson, Permanent Representative of The Bahamas to the UNOG. H.E. Minister Strachan re-affirmed the undiminished commitment of Nassau to WTO Membership. The Bahamas was finalizing its domestic coordination and was working to update its documentation for negotiations, comprehensively. It would seek technical assistance from the Secretariat to this end. Nassau was determined to advance its accession negotiations to maturity as soon as possible and was expeditiously re-organizing. The Bahamas would revert with a clear communication to the Director-General and Members early at the start of this year.

Belarus: The ball remained in the court of Minsk. The IGA was informed that Mr. Aleksandr Guryanov, Deputy Foreign Minister and the Chief Negotiator for the WTO Accession of Belarus, had informed the Secretariat in January that he had relinquished his position as Chief Negotiator. A new Chief Negotiator was yet to be appointed. Members were informed that the Secretariat maintained technical contact with Minsk. Substantive feedback from Belarus was pending on: (i) updated negotiating inputs, including the inputs to the Draft Working Party Report and the revised market access offers; (ii) the Roadmap; and, (iii) the list of the negotiating team, including the appointment of a new Chief Negotiator.

Accession Working Parties State-of-Play

Azerbaijan: H.E. Ambassador Walter Lewalter (Germany) had relinquished the Chairpersonship of the Working Party on the accession of Azerbaijan, on 8 January 2016. On behalf of H.E. Ambassador De Mateo, Chairman of the General Council, WTO DDG David Shark had initiated the process of appointing a new Chairperson. The deadline to submit nominations to DDG Shark was 16 February 2016.

Iran: In the course of MC10, the Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran had met with the Secretariat and, separately, with Ambassador Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya and Chairperson of the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, on 16 and 17 December 2015, respectively. In the course of these two meetings, H.E. Mr. Reza Nematzadeh, Minister for Industry, Mine and Trade of Iran, had requested that the accession process of Iran be re-activated in light of recent developments in 2015 and the valuable contacts and concrete engagements he was having with a wide range of Members with positive results. The Delegation of Iran noted that it had updated its negotiating inputs and was waiting for the re-activation of its process. The Delegation underscored that its immediate trade and economic priority was to seek re-integration to the global market economy.



Meeting with the Delegation of Iran, Nairobi, Kenya, 15 December 2015

Lebanon: H.E. Ambassador Jean-Paul Thuillier, Chairperson of the Working Party on the accession of Lebanon, was scheduled to visit Beirut, in March 2016, accompanied by the Secretariat. The objective was for the new Chairman to establish contact with the authorities, assess the situation and, exchange views on the way forward.

Sudan: The Director Accessions met with H.E. Mr Kamal Ali, Minister for International Co-operation of Sudan, on the margins of MC10. Minister Ali had informed the Secretariat that: an Inter-Ministerial Committee on WTO Accession, chaired by the Vice President, had been established; the National Secretariat for WTO Accession had been shifted from the Trade Ministry to the Ministry of International Cooperation; a Chief Negotiator had been appointed in November; and, that Khartoum was updating the documentation for the re-start of its accession negotiations.

Applications for Accession

Somalia: Somalia had submitted its application to accede to the WTO on the margins of MC10. The application would be circulated to Members once the Secretariat confirms the existence of technical platforms, identifiable and reachable contact points and logistics with Mogadishu that would enable actual negotiations with Somalia. Members would be updated as soon as this information was available.



Meeting with the Delegation of Somalia, Nairobi, Kenya, 17 December 2015

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
Thursday, 28 January 2016	IGA	1 st 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening fax dated 21/01/2016 refers	E
[Thursday, 28 February 2016]	IGA	2 nd Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening fax pending	E
[End April / Mid May]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Early July / Mid July]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	14th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Week of 26 September or Week of 3 October]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	15th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[First Semester]	The Bahamas	3 rd Working of the Working Party on the Accession of the Bahamas	Convening Notice pending	TBC

Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

- ✦ The 4th China Round Table took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 13-14 December 2015. It was a high-level event with the participation of WTO Director-General Azevêdo, H.E. President Kenyatta of Kenya, Cabinet Secretary of Kenya and MC10 Chair H.E. Ms. Amina Mohamed, H.E. Vice Minister Wang of China, and 40 Ministers from Africa and LDCs. Discussions focused on two themes:
 - Accessions and Post-Accession of LDCs, with the participation of the Chief Negotiators from Afghanistan and Liberia as main speakers. They highlighted achievements and challenges which they had encountered during their accession processes, and emphasized the critical importance of post-accession support to maximize the benefits of WTO membership; and,
 - African Perspectives on the Future of the Multilateral Trading System, based on commissioned papers from trade experts and presentations from high-level speakers. All presentations are available on the dedicated website on the Fourth China Round Table. Full deliberation and outcome from CRT-04 will be reflected in the forthcoming book entitled "African Perspectives on the Future of the WTO", to be jointly published by the Cambridge University Press and the WTO in the fall 2016.
- ✦ On the margins of the Nairobi China Round Table, DG Azevêdo and the Chinese Vice Minister, signed the extension of the China Programme, with a contribution from the Government of China of US\$ 500,000 for the Programme in 2016.



- ✦ On 8 December 2015, the WTO Secretariat participated in a Conference in Belgrade, related to Serbia's objective of EU and WTO accession. The Conference was organized by the ISAC Fund, in coordination with the Faculty of Economics of the University of Belgrade and the Government of Sweden. The purpose was to increase awareness on the benefits of WTO membership. The WTO was represented by Ms. Petra Beslac.
- ✦ On 23 December 2015, the Secretariat contributed to a seminar "EAEU Functions and Challenges in light of the WTO Membership of its Member States", organised by UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus in Minsk. The WTO was represented by Ms. Anna Varyanik.



- ✦ The Secretariat was organizing, jointly with UNECE, a Regional Trade Policy Forum for the Economies of Central Asia, envisaged to take place in Ashgabat, from 11 to 13 May 2016. Secretariat preparations are being led by Ms. Maika Oshikawa (Accessions Division) and Mr. Samer Seif El Yazal (ITTC).
- ✦ The IGA was informed that the first half-year Retreat by the Accessions Division would take place this Friday, 29 January. The theme of the Retreat is: "ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS IN 2016 – WHAT SCOPE FOR PROGRESS IN A TOUGHER NEGOTIATING ENVIRONMENT?"

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