



# WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

## WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

### SECOND INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS

26 February 2016

#### Agenda:

- Report on Accessions Division Retreat— Strategic Objectives, Scenarios and Planning
- Accession of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) — Report by H.E. Rajmund Kiss (Hungary), Working Party Chairperson
- Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities
- Accession Working Parties State-of-Play: [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#) and [Lebanon](#)
- Applications for Accession: [Somalia](#)
- Updates on the Accessions Transparency Tool Box (ATTB): News on the forthcoming Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP) and report on the modernized WTO Accessions Newsletter

Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Director of the Accessions Division)

*“In concluding multilateral negotiations, including bilateral negotiations, all parties would need to be winners, bearing in mind that each party would need to give up something to arrive at win-win outcomes.*

*Twenty years of WTO accession negotiations have demonstrated that there is no other way.”*

*H.E. Mr. Rajmund Kiss, Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

#### [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#):

H.E. Mr. Rajmund Kiss (Hungary), Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, reported on the most recent developments; reviewed ‘Next Steps’; and, invited Members’ feedback.

He reported that, as agreed in January, Ambassador Ljubić-Lepine had provided regular reports to him, and to the Director of the Accessions Division on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s bilateral contacts. The WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had also been kept abreast of developments in *real-time* by his Secretariat team.

The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina had scheduled bilateral meetings with its Negotiating Partners in the week of 29 February on the basis of improved Market Access Offers. The WP Chairperson reiterated that his understanding with Sarajevo was that the Negotiating Team, led by Mr. Hamdo Tinjak, would stay in Geneva until **all** outstanding bilateral market access negotiations are advanced to conclusion.

The Negotiating Team had been reminded that WTO accession was a process of negotiations. Compromise was at the heart of WTO accession negotiations, as well as all multilateral negotiations. In concluding negotiations, including bilateral negotiations, all parties would need to be winners bearing in mind that each party would need to give up something to arrive at this outcome. Twenty years of WTO accession negotiations had demonstrated that there was no other way.

Acceding Governments and Members were reminded that although there were redlines that had to be observed both for Members and Acceding Governments, it was above all vital that “no Acceding Government could conclude its accession on the basis of an offer that would be ‘take it or leave it’. It did not work that way”.

The WP Chairperson appealed to all involved WTO members to

provide their support to the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina by concluding the remaining bilaterals as efficiently and as rapidly as possible. He reiterated his appeal because of the political will in Sarajevo for serious domestic reforms, global economic integration and specifically WTO accession. He observed that “these windows were transient: they opened and closed; and that, at this moment in time, the window was open”.

On the multilateral negotiations, the WTO Secretariat team was proceeding with its preliminary process of “legal scrubbing” of the Draft Working Party Report with a view to identifying parts that would require updated/inputs from Sarajevo. Relevant updates would include information on the enactment of outstanding legislative projects and agreed commitment texts.

The preliminary “legal scrubbing” process by the WTO Secretariat was already underway and would be in close coordination with the Negotiating Team. The WP Chairperson proposed that the close-to-final version of the draft Report be circulated to WTO members no later than the end of April.

On current pace, a stock-taking meeting of the Working Party was envisaged for the end of May.

The WP Chairperson thanked all Members and the WTO Secretariat for their support and guidance. He counted on the continued support of all WTO members in concluding the work of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on a priority basis.

If all parties, specifically, the Acceding Government, advanced outstanding work to conclusion over the next few months, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Multilateral Trading System stood a very good chance of concluding this accession in 2016.

The WP Chairperson promised to sustain his regular consultations

with WTO members and Ambassador Ljubić-Lepine, and to continue to stand advised by the Director of the Accessions Division and his team.

Following the WP Chairperson’s statement, three Delegations intervened. Overall, the Delegations stated strong support and readiness to engage with the Negotiating Team from Sarajevo next week, and welcomed the WP Chairperson’s appeal. The Acceding Government was encouraged to approach the negotiations with the objective to reach an agreement on the basis of compromise. The Director of the Accessions Division confirmed that the messages would be conveyed to Sarajevo with the expressed willingness of Members to conclude this accession.

Ms. Zorica Marić-Djordjević, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the WTO, conveyed her appreciation to the WP Chairperson and the WTO Secretariat for their assistance to the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She underscored that the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina would not only advance Bosnia and Herzegovina’s economic integration and growth but also facilitate the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the wider region. She expressed the full support of her Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina.



H.E. Mr. Rajmund Kiss at the Informal Group on Accessions Meeting, 26 February 2016



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting, 26 February 2016

## Accessions Retreat-Strategic Objectives, Scenarios and Planning

For transparency reasons, the Director of the Accessions Division reported to Members on the results of the Accessions Division's recent half-year Divisional Retreat, which took place on 29 January 2016.

Retreat results reaffirmed the strategic objectives of all WTO accessions, to serve as an instrument for:

- \* Serious and domestic policy, institutional and structural reforms;
- \* expansion of market access;
- \* updating WTO rules, as codified in WTO Accession Protocols;
- \* fostering bilateral/regional relationships and broader international cooperation; and,
- \* promoting universality of membership.



Accessions Bi-Annual Divisional Retreat,  
Jiva Hill Resort, Crozet, 29 January 2016



Meeting of WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo  
with H.E. Mr. Rashid MEREDOV, Minister of Foreign  
Affairs of Turkmenistan, Geneva, 8 February 2016

*"I have turned my  
spotlight on Africa"*

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo

## Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach

### Visit by WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo to Kazakhstan:

The Director of the Accessions Division briefed WTO members that the WTO Director-General would travel to Kazakhstan, a recent Article XII Member, in May 2016.

This would be the first visit by a WTO Director-General to Central Asia. The IGA family would be briefed on his visit.

### WTO/UNECE Regional Trade Policy Forum for Central Asia:

As part of the Director-General's strategic focus on Central Asia, the WTO would also hold, together with the UNECE and the Government of Turkmenistan, a Trade Policy Forum on Central Asia and the Multilateral Trading System, in Ashgabat from 11-13 May.

The Trade Policy Forum was expected to bring together, *inter alia*, the WTO Accession Chief Negotiators from Central Asia and their neighbours (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, plus Iran) to exchange accession experiences and lessons learned, with a view to assisting currently or prospective acceding economies.

Mr. Rashid Meredov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, had met with WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo, on 8 February. The Minister requested "a more direct relationship with the WTO Secretariat, and assistance to enable the deepening of Turkmenistan's process of capacity-building and development of expertise."

The Director-General had authorized a visit by the WTO Secretariat team to Ashgabat in May 2016, led by the Director of the Accessions Division. The purpose of this visit would be to: meet with Senior Officials in Government; identify how the WTO Secretariat could best provide support to Turkmenistan; and, participate at the WTO/UNECE Trade Policy Forum, from 11 to 13 May.

Also, to consolidate this strategic turn to Central Asia, WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark would attend the Astana Economic Forum, as had been the case in previous years.

## Accession Working Parties—State-of-play

**LDCs' Accessions:** The IGA was briefed that there were no developments to report on LDCs' accessions, at this time.

The representative of Yemen hoped that acceding LDCs would take substantive steps in 2016. He informed the IGA that he would raise the question of LDCs' Accessions at the LDCs' Consultative Group to brainstorm on how these acceding LDC economies could be motivated.

**Azerbaijan:** Former German Ambassador Walter Lewalter had relinquished his WP Chairmanship on 8 January 2016.

At the request of the Chairperson of the General Council, H.E. Mr. Fernando de Mateo, Deputy Director-General David Shark was conducting consultations, on behalf of the GC person, with regards to this vacant Chairmanship. WTO member delegations had been invited to submit their nominations by 16 February 2016.

**Lebanon:** Mr. Jean-Paul Thuillier (France), WP Chairperson, and a WTO Secretariat team would visit Beirut from 9-10 March. The new WP Chairperson's objective for this mission would be: to establish contact with the Government; assess the negotiating state-of-play; and, identify an understanding on the way forward.



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting,  
26 February 2016

## Application for Accession

The Director of the Accessions Division reminded the IGA that, as reported at the January IGA Session, [Somalia](#) had submitted its application to join the WTO, in December 2015.

The application would be circulated once the WTO Secretariat could ascertain the existence of technical platforms; identifiable and reachable contact points; and, logistics with Mogadishu that would enable actual negotiations with Somalia.

Members shall be updated as soon as this information would become available.



## FORTHCOMING ACCESSIONS PUBLICATIONS



*4th China Round Table – High Level Session – Nairobi, 14 December 2015*

### African Perspectives on Trade and the WTO: Domestic Reforms, Structural Transformation, and Global Economic Integration

A co-publication by the WTO and the Cambridge University Press would be launched on the margins of the 2016 WTO Public Forum.

### WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: The Upper Floors of the Trading System

In preparing for this next publication, the Director of the Accessions Division and his Team met with Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, former Member of the Swiss Federal Council & President of the Swiss Confederation in 2007 and 2011. They received wise counsel from a friend of the WTO.



*Accession of the Russian Federation – Meeting with Mme Micheline Calmy-Rey, former Member of the Swiss Federal Council & President of the Swiss Confederation in 2007 and 2011 Geneva, 2011*



*Meeting with Mme Micheline Calmy-Rey, Geneva, 25 February 2016*

# Accessions Transparency Tool Box (ATTB)

## WTO Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP):

The Accessions Division team had compiled the entire dataset, in English, for the new Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP), and had supplied it to the WTO Webteam.

The WTO Webteam was now in the process of inserting final data corrections and updates, as well as preparing the French and Spanish sites, with the assistance of the WTO translation unit.

The WTO Secretariat expected "to go live" with the new Accessions

Intelligence Portal (AIP) at the end of April.

Following the launch of the new Portal, the WTO Secretariat would welcome the feedback by WTO member delegations.

## WTO Accessions Newsletter:

The IGA was informed that the Accessions Division had re-designed the WTO Accessions Newsletter.

This was the 6th year of the WTO Accessions Newsletter. Since its inception in July 2010, 59 newsletters had been issued.

Over the past six years:

- \* the newsletter had been re-designed and modernized 4 times;
- \* translations in Spanish and French had been available since 2012;
- \* the reach of the newsletter had been expanded significantly.

The WTO Secretariat continued to strive to improve existing information and transparency tools. Feedback by WTO member delegations had contributed to the continuous improvement and modernization of the newsletter. See the graphic below for the WTO Accessions Newsletter metamorphosis.

# WTO Accessions Newsletter – Metamorphosis

**November 2011**

**February 2016**

**April 2015**

**August 2012**

**April 2013**

The graphic illustrates the 'metamorphosis' of the WTO Accessions Newsletter through five distinct covers. Each cover represents a different stage of its design and content evolution. The covers are arranged in a roughly circular path, with arrows indicating the flow of time and design updates. The November 2011 cover is the most basic, while the August 2012 cover is the most modern and comprehensive. The April 2013 and April 2015 covers show intermediate stages of redesign, including the introduction of new layouts, images, and content sections.

## Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meeting (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
Friday 26 February 2016	IGA	2 <sup>nd</sup> Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Fax dated 23/02/2016 refers	S3
[Tuesday, 22 March 2016]	IGA	3 <sup>rd</sup> Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	S3
[End April / Mid May]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Early July / Mid July]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	14 <sup>th</sup> 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	15 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[First Semester]	The Bahamas	3 <sup>rd</sup> Working of the Working Party on the Accession of the Bahamas	Convening Notice pending	TBC

## 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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