



WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Accessions Strategic Objectives

- ⇒ Domestic reform instrument
- ⇒ Systemic update
- ⇒ Market access expansion
- ⇒ International cooperation for trade

FIFTH INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS

Tuesday, 31 May 2016

Agenda:

- Director-General Roberto Azevêdo's visit to Kazakhstan and participation at the Astana Economic Forum (AEF)
- Working Parties in 2016 Focus: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)
- Working Party Re-activation: [Lebanon](#)
- Accession Working Party Maintenance - State-of-Play: [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Iran](#) and [Sudan](#)
- Technical Assistance and Outreach: Post-Accession; Ashgabat Trade Policy Forum
- Secretary of the Informal Group on Accessions

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

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President Nursultan Nazarbayev awards Dostyk Order to WTO Director-General, Astana, 26 May 2016 – © Kazinform



DG Azevêdo receives Kazakhstan's instrument of acceptance for the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement from Prime Minister Karim Massimov, Astana, 26 May 2016

"...it's clear that Kazakhstan has the drive to grow and prosper in the new economic reality. The country recently took another important step [...], it became the 162nd member of the World Trade Organization. Joining the WTO – and its system of global trade rules – marks an important milestone for Kazakhstan."

DG Azevêdo, at the Astana Economic Forum, 26 May 2016

Director-General Azevêdo's visit to Astana—Kazakhstan

Ms Zharkin Kakimzhanova, Head of the WTO Delegation at the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the UNOG, reported on the visit to the IGA on the visit by WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo to Astana and his participation at the Astana Economic Forum (AEF), from 25 to 27 May.

As part of the focus by the Director-General on Central Asia, this was the first official visit by a WTO Director-General to Kazakhstan and the region. During the visit, DG Azevêdo met with President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, the Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan Mr. Tokayev, Prime Minister Massimov, and other senior Government officials of Kazakhstan.

During the meeting with the President Nazarbayev, the prospects of cooperation within the framework of Kazakhstan's membership in the WTO were discussed. President Nazarbayev thanked the WTO Director General for supporting the WTO accession process of Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev

awarded Roberto Azevêdo *II Degree Dostyk Order* in recognition of his contribution to strengthening friendship and collaboration.

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov also met with WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. Prime Minister Massimov deposited with the Director-General Kazakhstan's Instrument of Acceptance of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The PM confirmed that Kazakhstan's WTO accession signalled the commitment by Kazakhstan to the international community that the country was stable and predictable, as a partner with a favourable investment and business climate in the region. Director General Azevêdo welcomed the effectiveness of the measures Kazakhstan had taken, in the work in progress, in improving the business climate and increasing the investment attractiveness, which was reflected in the Doing Business Index by the World Bank.

During the visit, DG Azevêdo participated in the 9th Astana Economic Forum (AEF), on "New Economic Reality: Diversification, Innovation and the Knowledge economy". DG Azevêdo participated as a speaker at the Plenary Session of the AEF opened by President Nazarbayev.

In his Plenary statement, the Director General emphasized the importance of the "New Silk Road" economic belt project designed to connect Asia with Europe, to rebuild traditional trade links along the ancient Silk Road, through Central Asia. He highlighted the benefits and opportunities that WTO membership offers, and the ways in which the organization supported Kazakhstan's economic goals. The Director-General underlined the value of the Trade Facilitation Agreement as a tool to boost trade, through reduction of trade costs and facilitation of regional integration. The DG urged Kazakhstan to engage in current exchanges at the WTO to ensure that the country continues to benefit from its membership.

Working Parties in 2016 Focus

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Secretariat reported to Members that the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina was approaching its final stage, but outstanding work remained on a few bilateral market access negotiations. Resolution and agreements would depend on constructive and appropriate compromises with the ball in the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The conclusion of few remaining bilateral market access negotiations was pressing. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had been advised of the state-of-play on the negotiations. Ambassador Rajmund KISS (Hungary), Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was in contact with all the parties in question to appeal for early conclusion.

On Rules, the Draft Working Party Report (DWPR) had been updated, legally scrubbed and had been set to its next-to-final version form. The Secretariat had circulated the updated DWPR and the final Legislative Action Plan (LAP), on 29 April. The circulated DWPR was the first component of the Draft Accession Package of Bosnia and Herzegovina that had emerged.

The Director of Accessions reminded IGA Members of the timing of agreed "Next Steps", earlier communicated to Members by the WP Chairman. All bilateral market access agreements were scheduled for submission to the Secretariat by mid-June, so that the WTO Secretariat could proceed with the consolidation of the Draft Goods and Services Schedules of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Technical Verification Meetings (TVMs) of the consolidated Draft Schedules for

Goods and Services were envisaged for the end of June. The next and final meeting of the Working Party was envisaged for the second half of July.

Members were informed the WP Chairperson and the Secretariat were in regular contact with H.E. Ambassador Ljubić-Lepine, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UNOG, and Mr. Hamdo Tinjak, Chief Negotiator on the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was encouraged to sustain its constructive engagement with Members and, in doing so, propose the remaining essential compromise offers, in keeping with WTO accession acquis, to enable the conclusion of its WTO accession negotiations.



Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Working Party Chairperson Consultation, Geneva, Switzerland, 28 April 2016

Working Party Re-activation



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting—
Geneva, 31 May 2016

Lebanon: The Secretariat reported to Members on delivery of the Workshop on Goods and Services in Beirut from 4 to 6 May 2016, as part of the process of re-activating the accession negotiations of Lebanon. In this context, the specific purpose of the workshop was to work with the Lebanese team of technical professionals to update the market access offers and reflect accession market access acquis since Lebanon's last offers in 2004.

As follow-up to the May Market Access Workshop, Lebanon was expected to prepare the next revision of its offers which would be close to its final draft goods and services schedules, and submit them to the Secretariat, for circulation to Members of the Working Party.

Negotiating inputs also required from the delegation of Lebanon included: (i) the revised Legislative Action Plan (LAP); (ii) Chapter inputs for the update of the Draft Working Party Report (DWPR); (iii) revised Agriculture Supporting Tables (AGSTs); and, (iv) an *Aide Memoire* on the developments in the Foreign Trade Regime since 2009 (as requested by Members at the March IGA).

These required inputs were yet to be submitted. When provided, they would need to provide a full picture of the current state-of-play at the legislative and regulatory fronts and recent developments in the Foreign Trade Regime of Lebanon. These would serve as the basis for an extended session between the Secretariat and the Lebanese Team in

Geneva, during which the Accessions Division would provide assistance in updating the Draft Report of the Working Party on the Accession of Lebanon (DWPR).

Director Accessions informed the IGA that, if these inputs were submitted by Beirut, processed by the Secretariat and circulated to Members before the summer break, H.E. Ambassador Jean-Paul Thuillier (France), the Chairman of the Working Party on the accession of Lebanon, envisaged convening a cycle of Working Party Meetings after the summer break.

The Director Accessions thanked Members, particularly, France and Sweden, for the support provided to this accession.

Accession Working Parties—State-of-play

Azerbaijan: This accession process was advanced and was work in progress. H.E. Ambassador Werner (Germany), Chairperson of the Working Party on the accession of Azerbaijan, thanked Members in the IGA for their trust in having him appointed as Chairman of the Working Party. The WP Chairman looked forward to convening the next Cycle of meetings – the 13th Working Party, in the second half of July.

The Secretariat reported that the new Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the UNOG, H.E. Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov, had paid a courtesy visit to WTO Director-General Azevêdo, on 10 May. Members were also informed that on 13 May, the Director Accessions had met with Deputy-Minister Mammad Guliyev, Chief Negotiator on the accession of Azerbaijan, on the margins of the Trade Policy Forum for Central Asia, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. During their meeting, the state-of-play on this accession had been reviewed. For the next cycle of Working Party meetings, Baku had submitted the following inputs: (i) Agriculture Supporting

Tables (AGSTs) and, specific Agriculture O&R Document; replies to Members' questions; revised Legislation Action Plan (LAP) and the accompanying legislation (circulated to WP Members); and (ii) inputs to the second revision of the Draft Working Party Report (DWPR), which were processed by the Secretariat, for circulation shortly.

Deputy Minister and Chief Negotiator Mr. Mammad Guliyev informed Director Accessions that Azerbaijan was working on a strategy to recover from the drop in oil prices to tackle the challenges of low reserves, economic diversification and export expansion. In this new Strategy, trade had been identified as one of the eight priority sectors. It was felt that WTO accession was a tool to foster domestic economic reforms.

The Secretariat also reported on the technical state-of-play on several Accession WPs.

Belarus: Minsk had informed the Accessions Division that domestically, it was updating its negotiating inputs. The Secretariat stood ready

to provide Minsk any assistance and technical inputs on specific areas of the accession negotiating inputs, if requested.

Iran: Members remained engaged in process of consensus building to re-activate the accession of Iran. At the meeting of the General Council on 12 May, a group of 19 Members had made a joint statement for the re-activation of the WP process on the accession of Iran. The accession dossier of Iran remained with the Chairperson of the General Council, H.E. Ambassador Harald Neple (Norway). The Accessions Team was in constant engagement with Members and Tehran.

Sudan: A delegation from Sudan led by H.E. Dr. Kamal Hassan, Minister of International Cooperation, would visit Geneva from 9 to 10 June. In Geneva, the delegation would engage in a series of bilateral meetings with the Secretariat and Members. The visiting delegation would include Dr. Hassan Ahmed Taha, Chief National Negotiator; and, Dr. Yassin Eisa, Secretary-General of the National Secretariat for WTO Affairs.



Director Accessions meeting with H.E. Mohammad Reza Nematollahi, Minister of Industry and Mines and Deputy Minister Sadeq Bigdelli on the Accession of Iran—
Nairobi, Kenya, 16 December 2015

Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

POST ACCESSION SUPPORT

The Secretariat reported to the IGA of the priority focus of WTO Director-General Azevêdo on Post-Accession support. This subject had also emerged as a principal area of policy engagement and professional activities in the Accessions Division. In preparation for the membership of Afghanistan and Liberia, the Accessions Division was providing Post-Accession implementation support to the respective Governments on two tracks: (i) specialised training workshops for post-accession, including notifications; and, (ii) a Post-Accession Forum, scheduled to take place on 19 July, in Nairobi, on the margins of the UNCTAD XIV.

The main purpose of these activities for Liberia and Afghanistan was to

build capacity for implementation to ensure that the new member would be ready on day 1 of membership to implement the balance of rights and obligations. Also, the coordinated implementation of a Post-Accession Implementation Strategy Support Plan, would provide a platform for the new members to leverage the benefits of WTO membership.

On **Liberia**, the Director Accessions informed the IGA that:

- The 'Act to Ratify the Protocol on the Accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) of the Republic of Liberia' was with the House of Representatives.
- The Secretariat was organizing a National Workshop on Post-Accession in Monrovia, Liberia, 27-29 June 2016, in partnership with UNCTAD.

The former Working Party Chairperson, Joakim Reiter (DSG, UNCTAD) would open the Workshop.

On **Afghanistan**, the Director Accessions informed the IGA that:

- The Accession Package of Afghanistan had been translated. The lower House of the Parliament was expected to adopt the draft law on ratification, shortly.
- On post-accession, Members were informed that the WTO Secretariat was organizing, together with UN ESCAP, a National Workshop on Post-Accession for Afghanistan, in Bangkok, Thailand, during the week of 11 July.

Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities (cont'd)

Post-Accession Forum

A Post-Accession Forum was being co-organised by UNCTAD and the WTO, on 19 July, in Nairobi during UNCTAD14.

This high-level Post-Accession Forum would bring together the Governments of Afghanistan and Liberia and their multilateral and bilateral trade development partners during their accession and as they prepare for their post-accession stage. The purpose of the Forum would be to provide a platform for the two Accessing LDCs to review their post-accession plans; and for partners to pledge their post-accession support, so that the two LDCs could maximise the benefits of WTO membership and effectively implement their obligations.

ASHGABAT TRADE POLICY FORUM

The Secretariat reported on the First Trade Policy Forum for Central Asia and the Multilateral Trading System, which had taken place from 11 to 13 May in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. This forum had been jointly organised by the WTO and the UNECE, and hosted by the Government of Turkmenistan.

The Forum had gathered Accession Negotiators from the region of Central Asia – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, as well as Azerbaijan and Iran.

The Policy Forum had provided a platform for an original and rich dialogue and exchange of experiences amongst the Chief Negotiators of the Region on their accession negotiations. These ranged from the concluded accession negotiations of the Kyrgyz Republic (1998), Tajikistan (2012), Kazakhstan (2015), to the on going negotiations of Azerbaijan with a review of the state-of-play on the Accession of Iran.

Notably, constructively and positively, in sharing their accession experiences, several points were underscored by the Chief Negotiators namely that:

- ◆ the accession process was instrumental and critical to their domestic reforms, modernizing their economies, trade integration, finding new markets, and reducing the risk against their economies from unfair trade practices;
- ◆ the process of accession had enabled significant expansion in their capacity for operating in a knowledge-based economy;
- ◆ they attached great importance to the values of WTO membership, including the merits of the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement to promote regional cooperation and integration; and,
- ◆ they encouraged Turkmenistan to establish a relationship with the WTO, such as through application for WTO Accession, starting with Observer Status.

Participants agreed to the annual rotation of the Forum. They accepted the invitation from Kazakhstan to host the Forum in 2017.

At the conclusion of the Trade Policy Forum, participants adopted the Ashgabat Statement. This statement has been circulated to all WTO Members in document WT/ACC/26 and WT/GC/179. (Link: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/ashgabat2016_e.htm)

Meetings with the Government of Turkmenistan

As follow-up to the meeting between Director-General and Foreign

Minister of Turkmenistan H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov in February 2016, the WTO delegation held several bilateral meetings with the Government of Turkmenistan, prior to and in parallel with the Central Asia Regional Trade Policy Forum:

- ◆ The WTO delegation engaged in a Round Table dialogue with the Inter-Agency Commission on the WTO Accession, established by Presidential Decree to study WTO accession, including its impact and implication for Turkmenistan, before the Government decides on its WTO application.
- ◆ The delegation also held bilateral meetings with senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and Development, the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations and the State Agency for the Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources Of Turkmenistan.

At the Round Table and bilateral meetings, the WTO delegation explained the core principles and functions of the Organization, and described the process, substance and rationale for WTO accession. Following presentations, the WTO delegation engaged in Q&A exchanges, provided additional information and, clarified specific issues raised by the Government.

In addition to the engagement with the Government, the Director Accessions delivered a lecture on: "The Role of the WTO in the Global Economy and the Necessity for Membership", at the International University for the Humanities and Development, on Friday, 13 May.



Ashgabat Trade Policy Forum—Group photograph Mr. Shamyrat Mustapayev, Deputy Minister of Economy and Development—Cecilia Klein, USTR, Former Negotiator for WTO Accessions—11-13 May 2016



Meeting with Mr. Vepa Hajiyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Round Table with the Inter-Agency Commission on WTO Accession of Turkmenistan, Director Accessions Lecture at the International Universities for the Humanities and Development, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 10-13 May 2016

Announcement—Special Guest for the June IGA Meeting

The Director Accessions informed IGA Members that H.E. Ms Micheline Calmy-Rey, Former Member of the Swiss Federal Council and Former Foreign Minister and President of the Swiss Confederation in 2007 and 2011, would be the Eminent Guest Speaker at the next Session of the Informal Group on Accessions, on 30 June. Madame Calmy-Rey would share her insights, experience and best practices in negotiations and mediation processes. Madame Calmy-Rey currently lectures, *inter alia*, at the University of Geneva. IGA Members were encouraged to be represented at HODs level, if possible.

Secretary of the Informal Group on Accessions

The Director Accessions informed IGA Members about the change of the IGA Secretary. Ms Josefita Pardo de Leon would be replaced by Mr. Dimitar Bratanov. The Director paid tribute to the valuable contributions over many years by Josefita.



Announcement and Invitation "UAE DAY"



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is proud to announce the 20th anniversary of WTO membership on the margins of its 3rd Trade Policy Review to be held on June 1 - 3, 2016.

WTO Members are cordially invited to attend a Special Anniversary Panel Session on Thursday, 2 June 2016, from 9.00 to 13.00hrs, in Room W.

The UAE looks forward to celebrating this milestone with all!

List of WTO Accessions Working Party Chairpersons

No.	Government	Date Working Party established	WP Chairperson
1.	Algeria	17 June 1987	H.E. Mr Alberto Pedro D'Alotto (Argentina)
2.	Andorra	22 October 1997	Pending
3.	Azerbaijan	16 July 1997	H.E. Dr. Walter Werner (Germany)
4.	The Bahamas	18 July 2001	H.E. Mr Wayne McCook (Jamaica)
5.	Belarus	27 October 1993	H.E. Mr Haluk Ilicak (Turkey)
6.	Bhutan*	6 October 1999	H.E. Mr Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria)
7.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	15 July 1999	H.E. Dr. Rajmund Kiss (Hungary)
8.	Comoros, Union of the*	9 October 2007	H.E. Mr Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru)
9.	Equatorial Guinea*	5 February 2008	Pending
10.	Ethiopia*	10 February 2002	H.E. Dr. Steffen Smidt (Denmark)
11.	Iran	26 May 2005	Pending
12.	Iraq	13 December 2004	H.E. Mr Omar Hilale (Morocco)
13.	Lebanese Republic	14 April 1999	Mr Jean-Paul Thuillier (France)
14.	Libya	27 July 2004	Mr Víctor Echevarría Ugarte (Spain)
15.	Sao Tomé and Príncipe*	26 May 2005	Pending
16.	Serbia	15 February 2005	H.E. Mrs Marie-Claire Swärd Capra (Sweden)
17.	Sudan*	25 October 1994	Pending
18.	Syrian Arab Republic	4 May 2010	Pending
19.	Uzbekistan	21 December 1994	H.E. Mr Seokyoung Choi (Korea)

* Least-developed country (LDC)

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meeting (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
[End June]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	[Technical Verification Meetings with Signatory-Members of the Draft Goods and Services Schedules]	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Thursday, 30 June 2016]	IGA	6 th 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-11:00)	Convening Notice pending	E
[Friday, 8 July 2016]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AM)	Convening Notice pending	D
[Tuesday, 26 July 2016]	IGA	7 th 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	E
[27-28 July 2016]		[General Council]		
[Second half of July]	Azerbaijan	Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (AM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Second half of July]	Azerbaijan	13 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Azerbaijan (AM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Second half of 2016]	Lebanon	18 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Lebanese Republic	Convening Notice pending	TBC

Other Accessions Events

Date	Event
27-29 June 2016	National Workshop on Post-Accession for Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia
11-15 July 2016	National Workshop on Post-Accession for Afghanistan, in Bangkok , Thailand
19 July 2016	UNCTAD/WTO Post-Accession Forum, UNCTAD 14, in Nairobi , Kenya
28 September 2016	Book launch "African Perspectives on Trade and the WTO: Domestic Reforms, Structural Transformation and Global Economic Integration"— 2016 Public Forum
28 November—2 December 2016	Geneva-based training on services for selected acceding governments
December 2016	5 th China Round Table, Beijing, China

Accessions Toolbox

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



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