



# 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

### SEVENTH INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS

Tuesday, 26 July 2016

#### Agenda:

- Launch of the new WTO Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP)
- Accession Working Party Maintenance - State-of-Play: [Algeria](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Comoros](#), [Iran](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Sudan](#)
- Technical Assistance and Outreach: Meeting with Central Asia Countries
- Post-Accession: [Liberia](#) and [Afghanistan](#)

Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Officer in Charge of the Accessions Division).

### Stay connected



Follow @WTO

Tweet #WTOaccessions

## Welcome Liberia and Afghanistan!

In July, the WTO has welcomed two additional Members to the family. Liberia became the 163rd Member on 14 July. Afghanistan became the 164th Member today, 29 July. Afghanistan has also submitted its instrument of acceptance of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), becoming the 90th Member to do so.



Welcome Banner for Liberia and Afghanistan – WTO Building, Geneva



Protocols of Afghanistan and Liberia on display at the WTO Accessions Exhibition Corner – WTO Building, Geneva

*"WTO Membership will help Liberia to benefit from the international trade and investment that is essential to build the economy and improve people's live. I extend my particular congratulations to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Minister Axel Addy for the key role they played in the accession process, during an extremely challenging period for the country"*

DG Roberto Azevêdo

*"This is an historic day for Afghanistan and its integration into the global economy. We arrived at this point thanks to the commitment of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and the government of Afghanistan. WTO membership will be a foundation stone in the country's future development"*

DG Roberto Azevêdo

## Launch of the new WTO Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP)

### Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP):

The Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP) was launched by WTO Deputy Director-General David P. Shark. The new interface modernizes and upgrades the existing accessions gateway on the WTO website by increasing transparency and providing easy access to accession documentation and data.

The AIP also offers new features including:

- ⇒ direct access to all notified legislation – a comprehensive record of all legislation notified in completed WTO accession processes since 1995;

- ⇒ a Legislative Action Plan Register for all Article XII Members;
- ⇒ an interactive tracker, which provides a comprehensive snapshot of the status of ongoing accessions;
- ⇒ an interactive WTO accession map with a time bar, which allows users to visualise the evolution of WTO Membership since 1995; and,
- ⇒ dedicated sections on the Director-General's Annual Report on Accessions and the China LDC's Accessions Programme.

The portal is available at: [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/acc\\_e/acc\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/acc_e.htm).

Your feedback on the Accessions Intelligence Portal is welcome!

➔ Please send your comments to [accessions@wto.org](mailto:accessions@wto.org).

*"The new Accessions Intelligence Portal is another component of the accession transparency initiative. Today's launch is a significant step in achieving a greater standard for openness and transparency for WTO accessions. We look forward to extending this transparency further in the future."*

DDG David P. Shark



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting – Geneva, 26 July 2016

## Accession Working Parties—State-of-play



WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo meeting with Mr. Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh, Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade of Iran and H.E. Mr Bakhti Belaib, Minister of Commerce of Algeria — UNCTAD 14, Nairobi, Kenya, 18 July 2016

**Algeria:** Director-General Azevêdo met with H.E. Mr. Bakhti Belaib, Minister of Commerce of Algeria on the margins of the fourteenth session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD14). Minister Belaib provided reassurances that Algiers would submit negotiating inputs (replies to questions, legislative action plan and legislation) in the coming weeks. Consultations on the appointment of a new Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Algeria were ongoing, with the period for nominations extended to 15 September 2016.

**Azerbaijan:** The 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Azerbaijan took place on 22 July 2016. A plurilateral meeting on agriculture, chaired by the Accessions Division, was held on 21 July.

Chief Negotiator and Deputy-Minister Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev informed WP Members that, with the fall in oil prices, Azerbaijan saw an opportunity to diversify the economy and develop non-oil sectors. "Logistics and trade" had been identified as a priority sector for economic development. Azerbaijan also reported on the adoption of a new law on trade remedies.

Members raised questions on various aspects of Azerbaijan's foreign trade regime on the basis of the latest revision of the draft Report of the Working Party. They had also encouraged Azerbaijan to accelerate bilateral market access negotiations and had invited Azerbaijan to provide improved offers. Members were requested to submit written questions and comments to the Secretariat by 19 August 2016. The next cycle of meetings is envisaged for the first half of 2017.

**Belarus:** Minsk is working on the update of the accession documentation. Once the inputs are submitted to the Secretariat, they would be processed to ensure that their quality is up to the WTO accession standard, before circulation to WP Members. Depending on the timing of circulation of the inputs, the next cycle of WP meetings could take place in the second half of the year.

**The Comoros:** The Accessions Division met the delegation of the Comoros in Nairobi during UNCTAD14. The Comoros had submitted a comprehensive set of inputs to the Secretariat. These inputs are being processed. Once issued, they would provide the basis for holding the first meeting of the Working Party in the second half of the year.

**Iran:** Director-General Azevêdo met with H.E. Mr. Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh, Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade of Iran, on the margins of UNCTAD14. The Minister reiterated Iran's intention to submit an updated Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime and initial market access offers on goods and services.

**Lebanon:** Beirut is preparing the updated inputs for the next cycle of Working Party meetings. These include: a revised Legislative Action Plan; inputs to the Draft Working Party Report; revised Agriculture Supporting Tables; an Aide Memoire on the developments in the Foreign Trade Regime since 2009; and, updated Goods and Services offers. These inputs, once submitted and circulated to WP Members, would provide the basis for holding the next meeting of the Working Party, possibly in the second half of the year.

**Sudan:** A delegation of Sudan, led by H.E. Dr. Kamal Hassan Ali, Minister of International Cooperation, attended the General Council meeting on 27 July. Morocco, on behalf of the WTO African Group, sought Members' support for the re-activation of Sudan's accession process to the WTO and stressed the importance of technical assistance during and after the accession. 16 Members took the floor to express their support.

Minister Ali, speaking after Members, expressed his Government's firm commitment to the objectives and principles of the multilateral trading system and explained that Sudan had taken domestic and institutional reforms pursuing a progressive opening of its economy. The General Council appointed Mr. Ryosuke Kuwana, Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the WTO, as Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan.

After the General Council meeting, the delegation of Sudan met with the newly appointed WP Chairperson and the Accessions Division to discuss next steps in the work of the Working Party. Specific steps and timelines for re-activation of the accession process were agreed.



Accession of Sudan — Meeting with Mr Ryosuke Kuwana, Chairperson and Dr. Kamal Hassan Ali, Minister of International Cooperation — Geneva, 28 July 2016



13th Working Party Meeting on the Accession of Azerbaijan — Geneva, 22 July 2016

## Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

### Meeting with Central Asian Countries

The Secretariat organised an informal meeting with the representatives of Central Asian countries in the Centre William Rappard on 26 July 2016. Mr. Petko Draganov, Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, based in Ashgabat, was invited as a special guest. A first of its kind, this meeting, chaired by WTO Deputy Director-General David P. Shark, was organized at the initiative of Secretariat to deepen WTO's engagement with the region.

The representatives of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan stressed the importance of increased regional cooperation on trade and connectivity, given the landlocked

status of their countries. They saw recognized that cooperation in the region could be further facilitated by the WTO Agreements, in particular the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Turkmenistan indicated that it was studying various aspects of the WTO accession.

The Central Asian representatives appreciated the increased focus by the WTO on the region, which was reflected in the WTO Director-General Azevêdo's recent visit to Astana, the Ashgabat Trade Policy Forum, the Dushanbe Post-Accession China Round Table, and the first Regional Trade Policy Course to be held in Almaty. The participants agreed to continue their dialogue.



H.E. Mr Petko Draganov—Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Central Asia - © UNRCCA

## WTO Post-Accession

### Post-Accession Implementation and Support

Post-Accession support is of central importance to WTO membership and WTO Director-General Azevêdo. It had been a major work focus in the Secretariat since 2014, in particular, with the emphasis on two recently acceded LDCs, Liberia and Afghanistan.

The Secretariat recalled the four pillars of post-accession implementation support for LDCs:

(i) "Best Practices on WTO Post-Accession", drawn from experience and lessons learned from the complete accessions, structured on seven specific areas to prepare for membership (document WT/ACC/27);

(ii) the development of country-specific WTO post-accession implementations strategies;

(iii) specialized training on WTO post-accession for LDCs; and,

(iv) the internal Secretariat note on post-accession implementation and monitoring.

In line with the four-pillar strategy, the Secretariat facilitated preparations for the WTO Membership of [Liberia](#) and [Afghanistan](#) this month.

### Post-Accession Best-Practices

1. Policy Framework for WTO Membership
2. Institutional and Coordination Structures
3. Legislative Framework for Implementation
4. Transparency
5. Technical Assistance and Capacity Building
6. Outreach
7. Participation in the work of the WTO

### National Workshop on Post-Accession for Liberia

Liberia became the 163rd Member on 14 July 2016. In preparation for Liberia's WTO membership, the Accessions Division delivered a specialised training on post-accession in Monrovia, from 27 to 29 June. This was the first post-accession technical assistance activity organised by the Secretariat, funded under the China Programme, in response to the specific needs articulated by Liberia during its accession.

Specific objectives of the post-accession training, were to: (i) provide training on the implementation of the accession-specific commitments undertaken by

Liberia; (ii) assist the Government of Liberia in preparation of its initial notifications; and, (iii) prepare Liberia for the Post-Accession Forum on the margins of UNCTAD14.

The training was opened by H.E. Mr. Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia and Chief Negotiator; and H.E. Ms Elfrieda Stewart Tamba, Head of the Liberia Revenue Authority; who are co-chairs of the Steering Committee on Post-Accession. This activity attracted about 70 participants from different line Ministries of Liberia, the Legislature (including Hon. Senator Jim Tornonlah, Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce

and Industry), the private sector, and media.

The international development community in Monrovia, including the Chinese Embassy, the Swedish National Board of Trade and UNDP, participated and expressed gratitude for this timely activity.

After the workshop, the Secretariat delegation was invited to pay a courtesy visit to H.E. Madame President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. President Sirleaf expressed her appreciation for the work of the WTO Members and Secretariat for a successful conclusion of Liberia's accession.



National Workshop on Post-Accession for Liberia — Monrovia, Liberia, 27-29 June 2016

### Policy Dialogue on Post-Accession for Afghanistan

Afghanistan became the 164th Member today, on 29 July 2016. In preparation for its WTO membership, the Policy Dialogue on Post-Accession for Afghanistan was held on 11-15 July 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand, by the Secretariat in collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). This was the second post-accession technical assistance activity organised by the Secretariat and sponsored by the China Programme.

The objective of the activity was to provide a platform for Afghanistan to strategize on its post-accession implementation roadmap and, prepare Afghanistan for its upcoming

membership, by (i) providing training on the implementation of the accession-specific commitments of Afghanistan; (ii) assisting the Government of Afghanistan in preparation of its initial notifications; and, (iii) preparing Afghanistan for the Post-Accession Forum on the margins of UNCTAD14.

Afghanistan identified key components of its post-accession strategy, as follows: achieving full WTO-consistency of its legal framework; active participation in the work of the WTO and effective use of WTO instruments; attraction of foreign direct investments; export promotion; human capacity building; and, securing technical assistance and support.

The Delegation of Afghanistan to the Post-Accession Dialogue comprised of senior governmental officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; Ministry of Public Health, ANSA (Afghanistan National Standards Authority); and, the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan.

Representatives of China and Lao PDR joined the Dialogue to share their post-accession experiences. The EIF Secretariat also participated to contribute on the matters of technical assistance to Afghanistan.



Post-Accession Forum — UNCTAD 14 — Nairobi, Kenya, 19 July 2016

### Post-Accession Forum

The WTO Secretariat, in partnership with UNCTAD, organized a Post-Accession Forum on 19 July 2016 on the margins of UNCTAD14 in Nairobi, Kenya. It brought together the Governments of Afghanistan and Liberia and the multilateral and bilateral partners that have provided support to the two LDCs during their accessions.

The Forum provided a platform for the two Members to showcase their initial post-accession work; and for the partners to pledge their post-accession support, so that the two LDCs can maximise the benefits of the WTO membership.

The forum was opened by WTO Deputy Director-General Frederick Yonov Agah. He encouraged the support of the international community in the post-accession implementation strategies of Liberia and Afghanistan.

H.E. Mr. Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia and H.E. Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Commerce and Industries of Afghanistan, presented their expectations and concrete steps taken to date, to prepare for their WTO membership.

Other high-level speakers present at the forum included: Mr. Joakim Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD and former Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia; Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, and Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director of the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

The event heard a pledge from the international community to provide Liberia and Afghanistan post-accession support to help them advance their domestic reforms and their trade and development agenda.



Policy Dialogue on Post-Accession for Afghanistan — Bangkok, Thailand, 11-15 July 2016

➔ For more information on post-accession, please visit the new Accessions Intelligence Portal at the following link: [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/acc\\_e/post\\_acc\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/post_acc_e.htm)

## List of WTO Accessions Working Party Chairpersons

No.	Government	Date Working Party established	WP Chairperson
1.	Algeria	17 June 1987	Pending
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	Mr Ryosuke Kuwana (Japan)
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
Tuesday, 26 July 2016	IGA	7 <sup>th</sup> 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Fax dated 18/07/2016 refers	E
[27-28 July 2016]	General Council			
[Tuesday, 20 September 2016]	IGA	8 <sup>th</sup> 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	E
[October]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	[Technical Verification Meetings with Signatory-Members of the Draft Goods and Services Schedules]	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[October]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Second half of 2016]	Belarus	Informal/Formal Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Second half of 2016]	Comoros	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of Comoros	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Second half of 2016]	Lebanon	18 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Lebanese Republic	Convening Notice pending	TBC

## Other Accessions Events

Date	Event
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 <sup>th</sup> China Round Table, Beijing, China

## 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](#)



Contact the WTO Accessions Division Secretariat: [accessions.newsletter@wto.org](mailto:accessions.newsletter@wto.org)