



WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Accessions Strategic Objectives

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

NINTH INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS

Monday, 31 October 2016

Agenda:

- LDC Accessions—Strategic Priorities for 2017:
 - * Accession of the Union of the **Comoros**: Report by Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia, Working Party Chairperson
 - * Accession of **Sudan**: Report by Mr. Ryosuke Kuwana, Working Party Chairperson
- Accession Working Parties Strategic Focus: **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus**
- Accession Working Parties State-of-Play: **Algeria, Equatorial Guinea**
- Expressions of Interest: **Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan**
- Technical Assistance and Outreach: Course on Trade in Services for WTO Acceding Governments; LDCs Sub-Committee; 5th China Round Table
- Special Focus: Accession of **Sudan**—Diary from Khartoum

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

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LDCs Accessions—Strategic Priorities for 2017

Comoros: Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of the Comoros, briefed IGA Members on the state-of-play on the accession of Comoros.

WTO membership was a top priority for Comoros, and its Government was fully committed to accelerating its accession process with a view to conclusion by the 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017 (MC11). Since early 2015, Moroni undertook intensive technical work, which resulted in the circulation of a comprehensive set of 13 documents to the Working Party on 7 October 2016. This submission included: i) replies to Members' questions on the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR); ii) a Legislative Action Plan (LAP); iii) questionnaires, checklists and information on import licensing, State Trading Enterprises, customs valuation, TBT, SPS, TRIPS and Agriculture Domestic Support and Export Subsidies, and; iv) 31 pieces of legislation. Comoros also submitted its initial market access offers on goods and services. With the exception of the initial offer on

goods and the legislation, all other documents were translated into English from French.

The Chairperson announced that the First Working Party Meeting on the Accession of Comoros would be held on 2 December 2016. The Delegation of Comoros would be led by H.E. Mr. Djaffar Ahmed Said Hassani, Vice-President of the Union of the Comoros. The Delegation expressed its readiness to engage with Members substantively during the First Working Party Meeting, so that concrete progress could be made to move the accession process rapidly to the negotiating stage.

The Chairperson reminded the IGA that Comoros was an LDC facing capacity constraints, both in Geneva and in capital. Members were invited to submit their questions in advance of the First Working Party Meeting, ideally by 18 November, as this would give Moroni sufficient time for its preparations. Members that were interested in holding bilateral meetings with Comoros were also encouraged to inform the Delegation of Comoros and the Secretariat, as soon as possible.

The Chairperson concluded by stating that Comoros' objective to conclude its accession negotiations by MC11 was achievable, with the support of Members for an expedited process, based on the experience of the Accession of Liberia concluded in 2015.



Accession of the Union of the Comoros — Meeting with Amb. Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Working Party Chairperson and Amb. Chouzour (Comoros) Geneva, 20 October 2016



accession of Sudan. In this regard, he expressed appreciation to the Government of China for its decision to provide accession-specific support for Sudan under the "China's LDCs and Accessions Programme (The China Programme)".

Finally, the Chairperson concluded by stating that accession to the WTO was of critical significance to the economic and structural transformation of Sudan, as it provided a credible path for building a "New Era of Sudan". Moreover, the success of this accession would have positive spill-overs in the region where several countries were yet to join the WTO, in terms of prosperity, security and stability.

This mission assisted the Government of Sudan in the updates of the accession documentation for the resumption of the Working Party. On 25 October, the updated version of the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR), together with the Legislative Action Plan, the legislation and a consultation document were circulated to Members.

The Chairperson announced that following consultations with the Acceding Government and Members, the Third Working Party Meeting would be convened in December 2016. Members were invited to submit their questions on the MFTR and other documents by 22 November, so that Sudan would have sufficient time to prepare for the next Working Party Meeting. Sudan also indicated that it would circulate the updated market access offers on goods and services before the next Working Party Meeting.

The Chairperson highlighted the critical importance of technical assistance in sustaining and accelerating the momentum on the

Sudan: Mr. Ryosuke Kuwana (Japan) Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan, briefed IGA Members on the state-of-play on the accession of Sudan.

Since the announcement of the resumption of the accession process at the General Council in July 2016, Sudan had established functional institutional frameworks to prepare for the accession process. Sudan had established a High Committee Supervising Sudan's Accession to the WTO, chaired by the Vice-President, which comprised of 21 Ministries involved in the formation and implementation of trade policy in the country. The organigram of the High Committee had been available to the Working Party. In August, the High Committee had endorsed a Roadmap which outlined specific technical steps for conclusion of its accession process by MC11.

The Chairperson provided a comprehensive report on the Secretariat mission, led by the Secretary of the Working Party, to Khartoum from 27 September to 6 October. (See page 3 for the 'Diary from Khartoum' which provides a brief account of the highlights of this



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting — Geneva, 31 October 2016



Accession of Sudan — Working Lunch Geneva, 27 October 2016

Accession Working Parties Strategic Focus



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

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Based on the Secretariat's recent contact with Mr. Hamdo Tinjak, Chief Negotiator, Sarajevo remained fully committed to an early completion of its WTO membership negotiations in the first half 2017. He expected that all outstanding legislative work would be finalised in the coming weeks. Both the Acceding

Government and Members were encouraged to resolve the remaining issues, in particular bilateral market access negotiations, with a view to finalizing all technical work in the first quarter of 2017.

Belarus: The Secretariat draft of the updated Factual Summary of Points Raised was being reviewed in Minsk. Depending on the number of commitment paragraphs that would be incorporated in the text as a result of the feedback received from

Belarus, the updated document could be circulated as an "Elements of a Working Party Report". The date of the next Working Party meeting would be fixed following the circulation of the updated document and in coordination with the new Working Party Chairperson that would be appointed following the departure from Geneva of the current Chairperson, Ambassador Haluk Ilıcak (Turkey).



Accession of Belarus— Video-conference with Minsk— Geneva, 19 October 2016

Accession Working Parties State-of-Play

Algeria: Ambassador Gustavo Miguel Vanerio Balbela (Uruguay) was appointed as Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Algeria, at the meeting of the General Council on 3 October, following the departure of Ambassador Alberto Pedro D'Alotto (Argentina).

Equatorial Guinea: On 10 October 2016, H.E. Mr. Oliveira Borupu, Minister for Trade of Equatorial Guinea, addressed a letter to the WTO Director-General, requesting technical assistance to help the Government initiate its WTO accession process, in particular with

regard to the relevant documentary inputs through a national workshop in January 2017.



Accession of Algeria— Meeting with Amb. Vanerio Balbela (Uruguay), Working Party Chairperson— Geneva, 28 October 2016

Expressions of Interest

Timor-Leste: In April 2015, the Government of Timor-Leste submitted its application for WTO accession to the Director-General in accordance with Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement. In response to a specific request from the Government, the Secretariat would travel to Dili on 7-8 November to assist the Government in the preparation of a short Statement on its Foreign Trade Regime, which would be annexed to the application. The Government's

intention would be to submit the complete set of its application for consideration by WTO Members at the next meeting of the General Council scheduled for 7-8 December 2016.

Several partners, including Brazil, Cambodia and the Secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, expressed their readiness to support Timor-Leste, a Portuguese speaking LDC, once its accession process started.

Turkmenistan: The Accessions Officer in Charge met H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on the margins of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, on 4 October. At this meeting, Minister Meredov informed that following the Secretariat's visit to Ashgabat in May 2016, domestic consultations had been on-going on its application for WTO observer status, with a view to taking a final decision shortly.



WTO Director-General David Shark meeting with Ambassador Atageldi Haljanov (Turkmenistan) - Geneva, 13 October 2016

Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

Course on Trade in Services for WTO Acceding Governments

A Training Course on Trade in Services for Acceding Governments would take place in Geneva on 28 November to 2 December 2016. The objectives of the course included to: i) review key milestones in the accession process as they relate to trade in services; ii) provide in-depth training on all accession relevant aspects of trade in services with a focus on scheduling, classification, and implementation issues in main sub-sectors; iii) enhance understanding of the negotiating objectives of other WTO Members involved in accession negotiations; and, iv) provide a platform for exchanging views with services negotiators from recently completed accessions. Twenty nine government officials would

participate in the training course from the following 13 acceding governments: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Serbia, and Sudan.

Sub-Committee on LDCs

On 19 October, the Accessions Officer-in-Charge made a presentation to the '79th Session of the Sub-Committee on LDCs' on the achievements and state-of-play on LDCs' accessions. The presentation demonstrated that Article XII LDCs, which had made deeper and more comprehensive commitments during their accessions than original LDC Members, generally exhibited a higher trade performance than

original Members, albeit the recent negative impact of the global growth slowdown.

The "Liberian model" was introduced to Members, specifying its key elements. Recognizing its effectiveness, the LDC Coordinator (Benin) expressed his appreciation to Members and the Secretariat for all the support and technical assistance given to LDC acceding governments.

Fifth China Round Table

The next China Round Table would be hosted by the Government of Cambodia in March 2017. The concrete dates and the thematic focus of the fifth China Round Table would be communicated in due course.



Sub-Committee on LDCs — Geneva, 19 October 2016

Accession of Sudan – Diary from Khartoum

Background

Upon the request of the Government of Sudan, the Secretariat dispatched a Team from the Accessions Division, also known as the "S-Team", to Khartoum from 27 September to 6 October 2016. The objective of the Secretariat mission was to conduct Technical Working Sessions with Sudan's negotiating team, to finalise the update of the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR) and the Legislative Action Plan (LAP). Sudan had set a firm target to advance its accession process for rapid conclusion by MC11.

Sudan's negotiating team was led by Chief Negotiator, Dr. Hassan Ahmed Taha, and included current and former officials who have been involved in Sudan's 22-year accession process. With the active participation of around 70 officials from different line-Ministries and the S-Team, the negotiating team worked around the clock - day and night - to update the MFTR and LAP.

Day 1 – Tuesday, 27 September 2016

The introductory session was opened by Chief Negotiator Dr. Taha and Secretary General of the National Secretariat on WTO Affairs Dr. Yasin. In their introduction, the S-Team made a presentation of the WTO accession *acquis* with a focus on Sudan's accession process. Participants engaged in a vibrant Q&A session, eager to contribute to the country's structural and regulatory reform process embodied in WTO accession.

Day 2 – Wednesday, 28 September 2016

In updating the MFTR, the Government sought contributions from senior experts who had drafted Sudan's 1999 Memorandum (among these experts, one had participated in the 1987 GATT Trade Policy Course!). Despite the re-shuffling of Ministries responsible for WTO affairs over the last 22 years, Sudan had successfully managed to maintain the technical expertise on WTO accession in the same team. Sudan's utilization of the retired officials who bore the institutional knowledge of the WTO accession process in transferring knowledge to the young generation was highly impressive. This exercise proved useful in drafting sections that required evolutionary anecdotes of Sudan's trade and economic history.

Day 3 – Thursday, 29 September 2016

The Technical Working Sessions sparked positive inter-ministerial discussions, particularly on the issues of agriculture, SPS, TBT and WTO law vis-à-vis the Sudanese domestic law. These discussions facilitated the implementation of accession-related trade reforms. Chief Negotiator Dr. Taha was a domestic reform-minded visionary who was always ready and willing to work overtime to redraft particular sections based on his previous capacity/experience, and frequently encouraged the Members of his team to always submit "accession-quality" work.



Day 4 – Friday, 30 September 2016

The Sudanese negotiating team celebrated the Islamic New Year 2016, while doing their "homework" on substantive sections of the MFTR.

Day 5 – Saturday, 1 October 2016

Officials and experts from 21 different Ministries contributed to the Technical Working Sessions to update the MFTR. An MFTR Committee, chaired by the former Governor of the Central Bank of Sudan, was set up to facilitate the updating process. Below the Committee, several sub-committees were established to review specific issues covered in the MFTR. The S-Team was humbled to learn that several members of the MFTR Committee were former Ministers and Permanent Secretaries who had retired from the government service but were committed to contributing to Sudan's WTO accession negotiations.



Day 6 – Sunday, 2 October 2016

During the Technical Working Sessions, Sudanese officials frequently made phone calls to other line-Ministries to clarify matters or request for further policy information, which was fundamental in generating domestic dialogue. The Chief Negotiator expressed his commitment and willingness to provide factual information of Sudan's trade policy regime to WTO Members, both positive and negative.

Day 7 – Monday, 3 October 2016

The Technical Working Sessions focused on trade in services, and officials from all relevant services-related Ministries were present. The session particularly benefitted from the presence of the former Minister of Transport, widely known as "The Services Expert" of Sudan who had been instrumental in tabling its initial market access offer in 2006.



Day 8 – Tuesday, 4 October 2016

As the Technical Working Sessions progressed based on the submission of the "homework" from various participants, the Chief Negotiator informed the Office of the Vice President of the emerging documents. Facilitated by Mr. Ryosuke Kuwana, Chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan, the Japanese Embassy in Khartoum invited the S-team for a dinner, hosted by the Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Hitoshi Nakamura.

Day 9 – Wednesday, 5 October 2016

All the remaining "homework" submitted by the MFTR sub-committees was incorporated into the master version of the updated MFTR. This was followed by a line-by-line review of the LAP where the Sudanese legal experts regularly intervened to provide substantive inputs. Once finalized, the Chief Negotiator applauded all the participants, who beamed with a sense of accomplishment, for their dedication and commitment to actively contributing to the Technical Working Sessions.

Day 10 – Thursday, 6 October 2016

Emergence of the Updated MFTR & LAP

The last day was dedicated to a final review of the updated MFTR, LAP, legislation and consultation documents which would be submitted to the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan. Upon conclusion of the review, Dr. Kamal Ali Hassan, Minister of International Cooperation, hosted the S-Team in a *surprise* 'Appreciation & Farewell' closing-ceremony. At this stage, the ball was in the court of the Government of Sudan to officially submit the finalised documentation upon the endorsement of the Vice President.

Mission Accomplished!!!



Reflections of the S-Team: The Sudanese people had remarkable warmth that seeped into their dedication and commitment to reforming their country. They were ready for a "New Era of Sudan" and WTO accession was recognized as critically significant to the economic and structural transformation of their country. When all the participants sang Sudan's National Anthem at the end of the intensive 10-day Technical Working Sessions, their "nation (re)building" strategy through WTO accession-led domestic reforms seemed to be in perfect harmony.

Other events



FT Africa Summit—London, 2-3 October 2016



*Brussels Conference on Afghanistan—
4 October 2016*

Condolences

We were saddened to hear the news of the passing of Ambassador Luzius Wasescha, former Ambassador of Switzerland to the WTO. Ambassador Wasescha was a key figure in Swiss trade diplomacy and the Multilateral Trading System. From his days as a Uruguay Round negotiator through to his involvement as Chairperson of the Negotiating Group on Market Access and other WTO bodies, as well as working on WTO disputes. Ambassador Wasescha also contributed to various WTO accession processes. In particular, he was closely involved in facilitating the conclusion of the Accession of the Russian Federation. Many of us had the invaluable opportunity to learn from his wealth of knowledge and experience. He will be missed.

List of WTO Accessions Working Party Chairpersons

No.	Government	Date Working Party established	WP Chairperson
1.	Algeria	17 June 1987	H.E. Mr. Gustavo Miguel Vanerio Balbela (Uruguay)
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	Pending
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
Monday, 31 October 2016	IGA	9 th 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Fax dated 24/10/2016 refers	E
[Late November/Early December]	IGA	10 th 2016 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[Friday, 2 December 2016]	Comoros	1 st Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of Comoros	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[7-8 December 2016]	General Council			
[December]	Sudan	3 rd Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[December]	Belarus	Informal/Formal Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[1st half of 2017]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Lebanon	18 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Lebanese Republic	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Azerbaijan	14 th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Azerbaijan	Convening Notice pending	TBC

Other Accessions Events

Date	Event
28 November - 2 December 2016	Geneva-based Courses on Trade in Services for Acceding Governments
March 2017	5 th China Round Table

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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