WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION | Accessions

N° 81 — January/February 2018

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

WTO Accessions Developments – Secretariat Report to Members

Accessions Strategic Objectives

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

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➔ **FIRST INFORMAL GROUP ON ACCESSIONS IN 2018** — Thursday, 2 February 2018

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- Accession Working Parties State of Play:
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Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Maika Oshikawa, Officer in Charge of the Accessions Division).

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Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Mission to Sarajevo— 22-23 January 2018

Accession Working Parties — 2018 Strategic Focus

Bosnia and Herzegovina — Working Party Chairperson's visit to Sarajevo, 22-23 January 2018

At the invitation of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria), the newly appointed Chairperson of the Working Party, visited Sarajevo on 22–23 January 2018. Accompanied by the WTO Secretariat, he held a series of high-level meetings with the Government, including Mr Mirko Šarović, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers; Mr Hamdo Tinjak, Head of the WTO Accession Negotiating Team and his team.

Meeting the Parliamentary Assembly

The Chairperson also met with Mr Mehmedalija Hadžović, Econonic Advisor at the Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers; Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Mr Šefik Džafirović, Second Deputy Speaker of House of Representatives, Mr Safet Softić, First Deputy Speaker of House of Peoples, and Mr Bariša Čolak, Second Deputy Speaker of House of Peoples, as well as the Chair and Members of the Parliamentary Commissions on Trade Policy and Customs from both Houses. A meeting was also held with Mr Nemanja Vasić, Vice President of the Foreign Trade Chamber, an association of approximately 30,000 mainly small and medium sized businesses.

Meeting Mr Nemanja Vasić, Vice President of the Foreign Trade Chamber

Meeting with Mr Mirko Šarović, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations

These meetings confirmed that all stakeholders supported a speedy conclusion of the accession process, which is now in its 19th year. Sarajevo was ready to engage in dialogue with Members to find solutions on the few remaining multilateral issues and to conclude outstanding bilateral market access negotiations with concerned Members around the next (13th) Working Party Meeting on 7 February 2018. In light of the general elections scheduled for early October, the objective of Sarajevo was to finalise all the required steps during the first half of 2018, including the approval of the Accession Protocol by the General Council.

The Chairperson expressed his readiness to actively engage with Members and Sarajevo to facilitate this advanced stage accession, especially during Bulgaria's EU Presidency which has placed the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union as its priority over the next six months. The WTO Secretariat conveyed the strong support of the Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for an early conclusion of this accession.

Meeting with Mr Mirko Šarović, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations

Working Parties — 2018 Strategic Focus (cont'd)

Delegation of the Union of the Comoros — MC11
December 2017 — Buenos Aires, Argentina

Union of the Comoros: Comoros has provided replies to questions raised by Members following the 3rd Meeting of the Working Party held in October 2017. The Secretariat is preparing a draft Report of the Working Party on the basis of these replies. Comoros is also updating its Legislative Action Plan and has begun submitting legislation for review. Comoros aims to circulate all relevant documents by mid-February 2018.

It is currently envisioned that the next Working Party meeting will take place in March 2018. Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), Chairperson of the Working Party, will consult on the specific timing of the next meeting, once all new documents are circulated. Comoros is hoping to conclude its outstanding bilateral market access negotiations before or at the next Working Party meeting.

Accession Working Parties State of Play — LDCs

Somalia: Somalia is in the process of finalizing its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime, which it aims to circulate to Members in the coming weeks. Ms. Maryan Hassan, Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession, is in regular technical exchange with the Secretariat in this regard.

Following a cabinet reshuffle, Minister Khadra Ahmed Dualeh, who led the Somali delegation to Buenos Aires in December 2017, is no longer in the Government. The new Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr Mohamed Abdi Hayir, was appointed in January 2018.

South Sudan: Following the establishment of the Working Party by the 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017, South Sudan requested a visit by the Secretariat so that Juba could begin preparation for the accession process. The Secretariat plans to visit Juba on 19-22 February 2018, to hold a series of meetings with high-level government officials, as well as to hold a first national workshop on WTO accession.

Condolences

Ambassador Kuol Alor Kuol Arop, Permanent Representative of South Sudan in Geneva, passed away on 27 December 2017. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo conveyed his condolences to the Government of the South Sudan, highlighting the leadership and instrumental role of the late Ambassador Kuol in launching the accession process of South Sudan to the WTO.

Sudan: In preparation for the next Working Party meeting, Sudan has circulated additional documents, including revised Agricultural Supporting Tables and related questions and replies, and an updated Factual Summary of Points Raised which the Secretariat prepared on the basis of replies to Members' questions provided by Khartoum.

During a videoconference on 17 January 2018, Khartoum informed Mr Ryosuke Kuwana (Japan), Chairperson of the Working Party, and the Secretariat of new trade policy developments associated with the introduction of the 2018 Budget, and promised to provide the details to the Working Party. In addition, Khartoum is also revising market access offers on goods and services, with a view to advancing bilateral market access negotiations. Following the circulation of these negotiating inputs to the Working Party, the Chairperson will consult with Members regarding next steps.

Accession Working Parties State of Play — Non-LDCs

Deposit of the bilateral market access agreement between Belarus and El Salvador — 18 January 2018

Belarus: Minsk has submitted replies to questions raised by Members following the 9th Meeting of the Working Party held in September 2017. The Secretariat is now updating the draft Working Party Report on the basis of these inputs, with a view to its circulation to the Working Party in March.

Belarus also deposited with the Secretariat three bilateral market access agreements which it had signed with Guatemala, El Salvador and Norway, before or at the 11th Ministerial Conference. In total, Belarus concluded six bilateral agreements in 2017.

On 23 January 2018, the Accessions Division and the SPS section of the Agriculture and Commodities Division jointly delivered a one-day seminar on SPS issues in Minsk, with the participation of over 50 experts, drawn from all relevant national agencies. The Secretariat also met with a small group of experts, who are directly involved in the accession process, to discuss the substance related to SPS issues contained in the draft Working Party Report.

It is currently envisioned that the next meeting of the Working Party will take place in April 2018. The Working Party Chairperson, Ambassador Kemal Madenoğlu (Turkey), will consult on the specific date following the circulation of the documentation.

Iraq: As follow-up to the Informal Working Party meeting held in November 2017, Iraq has updated its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime from 2005, with the expectation to circulate the document in early February. Iraq continues to work on other negotiating inputs, such as the Legislative Action Plan, accession Checklists, and initial market access offers on goods and services, with a view to circulating

Accession Working Parties State of Play — Non-LDCs (cont'd)

them to the Working Party in the coming months. This was also confirmed by Dr. Salman Al-Jumaily, Acting Minister of Trade of Iraq, in a recent letter addressed to Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), Chairperson of the Working Party.

The Chairperson, who is currently based in New York, was in Geneva on 29–30 January 2018. During his visit, he met with the Secretariat (including the WTO Director-General Roberto Azêvedo), representatives of several Members of the Working Party, and international organisations, such as the International Trade Centre and the UN Conference on Trade and Development. The objective of his meetings was to sustain the momentum created by the last Informal Working Party meeting by mobilising political and technical support for the accession process, until a formal resumption of the Working Party after the general elections in Baghdad. The Chairperson described the meetings as useful and productive.

Lebanon: Mr Raed Khoury, Minister of Economy and Trade, was in touch with Mr Jean Paul Thuillier (France), Chairperson of the Working Party, and the Secretariat regarding the domestic state of play on the accession of Lebanon. In his letter dated 8 December 2017, Minister Khoury noted domestic challenges faced by Beirut, especially the social and economic consequences from the Syrian Refugee Crisis, but confirmed Lebanon's continued interest in the WTO accession process.

On 22 January 2018, Ambassador Salim Baddoura, the newly arrived Permanent Representative of Lebanon, paid a courtesy visit to the WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. During this meeting, he reiterated the domestic challenges in Lebanon, but expressed his readiness to inject new energy into the process by working closely with Members and the Secretariat.

DG Roberto Azevêdo meeting with Ambassador Baddoura (Lebanon) - 22 January 2018

Accession Working Parties Re-activation

Accession of the Bahamas— Meeting with Ambassador McCook and the Permanent Mission of the Bahamas 18 January 2018

Bahamas: On 14 December 2017, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo received a letter from Mr Hubert Minnis, Prime Minister of The Bahamas. In his letter, the Prime Minister conveyed the Bahamas' interest to reactivate its WTO accession process immediately and conclude the process by the 12th Ministerial Conference in 2019. In his response, the Director-General welcomed the Bahama's renewed interest and expressed the Secretariat's readiness to send a mission to assist the negotiating team in the preparation of the technical work for resumption.

Ambassador Mr Wayne McCook (Jamaica) stepped down as Chairperson of the Working Party, at the end of January 2018. A vacancy for the Chairman has been announced by WTO Deputy Director-General Ambassador Alan Wm Wolff, on behalf of the Chairperson of the General Council. The deadline for receiving nominations is 9 February 2018.

Serbia: Ms Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia, wrote to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo, expressing the importance of WTO accession to Serbia. The Prime Minister expressed her Government's readiness to fulfil the necessary requirements in order to ensure WTO membership in the upcoming period. The Prime Minister also confirmed the appointment of Ms Olivera Jocić as the new Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession.

The Secretariat has been in touch with the Chief Negotiator, regarding the steps for resuming the Working Party, whose work was at the advanced stage. She is scheduled to visit Geneva during the week of 5 February 2018 to meet with Members and the Secretariat.

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
Thursday, 1 February 2018	IGA	1st 2018 Informal Group on Accessions (9:00-10:00)	Convening fax dated 25/01/2018	E
Wednesday, 7 February 2018	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina	WTO/AIR/ACC/16 and WTO/AIR/ACC/16/Corr.1, dated 25 January and 2 February, respectively	D
[Second half of March 2018]	Comoros	4th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of the Union of the Comoros	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[First half of April 2018]	Belarus	Plurilateral meeting on Agriculture	Convening Notice pending	TBC
		10th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[TBC]	Sudan	5th Meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Sudan	Convening Notice pending	TBC

Accessions Toolbox

- Accession Working Parties
- 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

List of WTO Accessions Working Party Chairpersons

Government	Date Working Party established	Working Party 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	Pending
5. Belarus	27 October 1993	H.E. Mr Kemal Madenoğlu (Turkey)
6. Bhutan*	6 October 1999	H.E. Mr Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria)
7. Bosnia and Herzegovina	15 July 1999	H.E. Mr Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria)
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 2003	H.E. Mr Carsten Staur (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 Victor Echevarría Ugarte (Spain)
15. Sao Tome and Principe*	26 May 2005	Pending
16. Serbia	15 February 2005	H.E. Mrs Marie-Claire Swärd Capra (Sweden)
17. Somalia*	7 December 2016	Pending
18. South Sudan	13 December 2017	Pending
19. Sudan*	25 October 1994	Mr Ryosuke Kuwana (Japan)
20. Syrian Arab Republic	4 May 2010	Pending
21. Timor-Leste*	7 December 2016	H.E. Mr Pedro Nuno Bártolo (Portugal)
22. Uzbekistan	21 December 1994	H.E. Mr Seokyoung Choi (Korea)

* Least-Developed Country (LDC)