Inside this issue:
- Accession of Ethiopia — WTO DG Azevêdo met with PM Ahmed and visited Addis Ababa
- Accession of Belarus: 11th Working Party Meeting — 15 February 2019
- 2019 Strategic Focus: The Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Accession Working Parties State of Play: Equatorial Guinea, South Sudan and Sudan
- Technical Assistance and Outreach activities:
  - Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules (4-15 February 2019)
  - Inaugural Session of the Accession Negotiators’ Network - 7 February 2019
  - 20th Anniversary of Latvia’s Accession to the WTO - 6 February 2019
  - Accessions Annual Outreach to Regional Groups — with Arab Group, 11 February 2019
- WTO Accession Progress Tracker and Evolving Work Programme
- Accessions Anniversary Dates — Article XII Members — January and February
- Accessions Toolbox

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

Accession of Ethiopia
WTO DG Azevêdo met with PM Ahmed and visited Addis Ababa

WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo met with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on the margins of the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos on 23 January. Prime Minister Abiy expressed his Government’s commitment to regional and global integration through WTO accession and participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area. He noted that Ethiopia sought to open its economy to international markets and that it was undertaking many reforms. DG Azevêdo expressed the Secretariat's full support for Ethiopia's accession process.

On the technical front, at the request of the Government of Ethiopia, the Secretariat undertook a mission to Addis Ababa on 14-18 January. The objective was to assist the technical team in updating the documentation for the official resumption of the Working Party in the spring 2019. The technical work continued during the Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules, 4 – 15 February, where Ethiopia was represented with four officials, including State Minister for Trade and Industry Mesganu Arga Moach.

On 12 February, DG Azevêdo visited Addis Ababa and met with Finance Minister Ahmed Shide, Investment Commissioner Abebe Abebayehu and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession Mamo Mihretu. It was reiterated that WTO membership was not an end in itself, but an important tool in achieving Ethiopia’s economic reform efforts.

The State Minister also met with WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff and with Ambassador Morten Jespersen, Chairperson of the Working Party, during his stay in Geneva, to discuss the next steps in the accession process.

Stay connected

Inside this issue:
- Accession of Ethiopia — WTO DG Azevêdo met with PM Ahmed and visited Addis Ababa
- Accession of Belarus: 11th Working Party Meeting — 15 February 2019
- 2019 Strategic Focus: The Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Accession Working Parties State of Play: Equatorial Guinea, South Sudan and Sudan
- Technical Assistance and Outreach activities:
  - Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules (4-15 February 2019)
  - Inaugural Session of the Accession Negotiators’ Network - 7 February 2019
  - 20th Anniversary of Latvia’s Accession to the WTO - 6 February 2019
  - Accessions Annual Outreach to Regional Groups — with Arab Group, 11 February 2019
- WTO Accession Progress Tracker and Evolving Work Programme
- Accessions Anniversary Dates — Article XII Members — January and February
- Accessions Toolbox

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

Accession of Ethiopia
WTO DG Azevêdo met with PM Ahmed and visited Addis Ababa

WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo met with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on the margins of the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos on 23 January. Prime Minister Abiy expressed his Government’s commitment to regional and global integration through WTO accession and participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area. He noted that Ethiopia sought to open its economy to international markets and that it was undertaking many reforms. DG Azevêdo expressed the Secretariat’s full support for Ethiopia’s accession process.

On the technical front, at the request of the Government of Ethiopia, the Secretariat undertook a mission to Addis Ababa on 14-18 January. The objective was to assist the technical team in updating the documentation for the official resumption of the Working Party in the spring 2019. The technical work continued during the Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules, 4 – 15 February, where Ethiopia was represented with four officials, including State Minister for Trade and Industry Mesganu Arga Moach.

On 12 February, DG Azevêdo visited Addis Ababa and met with Finance Minister Ahmed Shide, Investment Commissioner Abebe Abebayehu and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession Mamo Mihretu. It was reiterated that WTO membership was not an end in itself, but an important tool in achieving Ethiopia’s economic reform efforts.

The State Minister also met with WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff and with Ambassador Morten Jespersen, Chairperson of the Working Party, during his stay in Geneva, to discuss the next steps in the accession process.

Stay connected
Accession of Belarus — 11th Working Party Meeting - 15 February 2019

The 11th Working Party Meeting, chaired by Ambassador Kemal Madenoğlu (Turkey), took place on 15 February 2019. The delegation from Belarus was led by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Yeudachenka, and included Chief Negotiator Vladimir Serpikov, the deputy ministers of the Ministries of Justice, Anti-monopoly Regulation and Trade, and Agriculture, as well as high-level officials of various government agencies.

In his opening statement, Mr. Yeudachenka stated that the Belarusian government had formally set an objective to conclude the accession negotiations by the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12). Furthermore, he provided a brief overview of economic developments in Belarus, highlighting the Government’s efforts to modernize the economy through development of SMEs, the services sector, and e-commerce. He cited some of the recent efforts undertaken by his government to bring Belarus’ legislation in conformity with WTO rules.

Many Members expressed support for the MC12 target. They also underlined that significant progress would be needed to finalise accession negotiations. In particular, Members called on Belarus to address systemic matters linked to the operation of its State-dominated economy and EAEU regime, and to tackle specific trade concerns.

On the bilateral track, Belarus confirmed the conclusion of market access agreements with 20 Members, leaving six outstanding negotiations to conclude in the coming months.

The Working Party examined Belarus’ trade regime on the basis of the 2nd revision of the draft Report of the Working Party. Questions were raised on a wide range of issues, including the investment regime, state ownership, pricing and competition policies, industrial policy, TBT, SPS, IPRs. As for the next steps, Members were invited to submit comments and questions in writing by 15 March.

Working Parties – 2019 Strategic Focus

The Bahamas: In preparation for the 4th meeting of the Working Party, a revised Factual Summary of Points Raised and other documents were circulated in December 2018. The circulation of additional negotiating inputs, including revised market access offers for goods and services, is expected for early March. The 4th meeting of the Working Party is scheduled for the first week of April.

Three officials from The Bahamas, including Chief Negotiator Zhivargo Laing, participated in the Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules from 4 to 15 February. On the margins of the seminar, the delegation held bilateral meetings with several Members.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Sarajevo maintains regular contact with the Secretariat and Members in view of its commitment to secure an early conclusion of the accession process. This includes exchanges with the Secretariat on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s draft schedule for the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), which is scheduled for submission to the ITA Committee shortly.

Chief Negotiator Hamdo Tinjak and his team was present in Geneva on the margins of the Working Party meeting on the accession of Belarus to conduct bilateral meetings with Members.

Working Parties — State of Play

Equatorial Guinea: At the request of the Government of Equatorial Guinea, the Secretariat will undertake a mission to Malabo, on 5-7 March, to conduct training activities in the context of a National Seminar on the WTO and the Multilateral Trading System.

South Sudan: South Sudan circulated the Memorandum of the Foreign Trade Regime on 21 December 2018. One Member submitted questions on the MFTR which were transmitted to Juba at the end of January. At the request of South Sudan, the Secretariat undertook a mission to Juba on 12-14 February to assist the Government in preparing the documentation for the 1st meeting of the Working Party. On 19 February, all the documentation was circulated. The meeting is scheduled for 21 March, back to back with the Trade Policy Review of the East African Community on 20 and 22 March.

Sudan: Following the Secretariat’s technical mission to Khartoum in December 2018, an updated Factual Summary of Points Raised and other accession documents were circulated on 30 January 2019. The Working Party Chairperson is consulting on the next meeting of the Working Party.
Technical Assistance and Outreach activities

Seminar on WTO Accession Rules, 4 – 15 February 2019

29 officials from 15 acceding governments participated in a Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules, which took place in Geneva from 4 to 15 February. The event was the WTO Secretariat’s first training activity to focus on accession rules. The objectives of the seminar were to: (i) review the accession acquis; (ii) provide in-depth explanations of the WTO legal disciplines at issue in each section of a Working Party Report; (iii) enhance the participants’ knowledge on the content of recurring commitment paragraphs in Working Party Reports and how they relate to the relevant WTO legal disciplines; (iv) prepare the participants for the negotiation of commitments; and (v) provide background on treaty interpretation and the interpretation of accession commitments in WTO dispute settlement, including by exposing them to Panel and Appellate Body Reports’ interpretation of accession commitments.

WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff welcomed the participants and encouraged them to learn from the experience of the 36 members that have joined the WTO since it was founded in 1995. DDG Wolff highlighted the success of the accession process over the past 24 years and underlined the benefits membership brings to countries in terms of higher standards of living for their people.

During the two-week training course, the participants had the opportunity to draw on the experience of experts from various divisions of the WTO Secretariat. Participants also heard from experienced negotiators of WTO Members, including Article XII Members (see below).

The Inaugural Session of the Accession Negotiators’ Network took place on 7 February, as part of the Seminar on WTO Accession Rules. The Accessions Negotiators’ Network, launched in December 2017, aims to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between former and current accession negotiators, Working Party Chairpersons, and experts on WTO accessions. Currently, the Network has over 80 members with various background and expertise.

The Inaugural Session was chaired by Ambassador Saleh Al-Husseini (Saudi Arabia). At the opening, he noted that “dialogue and experience-sharing are powerful tools for advancing accession negotiations”, and that “it is important for acceding governments to learn from the experience of past accessions and apply the acquired knowledge to specific challenges in their ongoing negotiations”.

A panel of five former accession negotiators shared with their insights and lessons learned from their accession experience. The panel comprised: Mr. Mozammil Shinwari (Afghanistan), Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria), Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang (China), Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan) and Ambassador Indulis Ābelis (Latvia).

On 11 February, the Secretariat held a briefing session with the WTO Arab Group. This was part of the annual outreach activities, further to the ones held with the ASEAN Group, the Informal Group on Acceding Governments, the GRULAC in December 2018. Arab accessions currently account for more than one-thirds of the ongoing accessions. It was stressed that these accessions were critical for participation of Arab countries in the multilateral trading system.

20th Anniversary of Latvia’s Accession to the WTO — 6 February 2019

The Permanent Mission of Latvia to the UN Office in Geneva hosted a panel discussion, on 6 February, to mark Latvia’s 20 years anniversary of WTO membership. The panel discussion, moderated by WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff, was joined by Ms. Maija Manika (Latvia), Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria) and Ambassador Marc Vanheukelen (European Union). Ms. Maija Manika noted that the accession to the WTO “was one of the milestone achievements of Latvia’s foreign and trade policy after regaining its independence in 1991 and contributed greatly to economic reforms, development and integration of Latvia in the global trade”.

On 6 February, Ms. Maija Manika was joined by Mr. H.E. Martins Kreitus (Latvia), Ambassador Saleh Al-Husseini (Saudi Arabia), Ms. H.E. Saleh Al-Husseini (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Mozammil Shinwari (Afghanistan), Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria), Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang (China), Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan) and Ambassador Indulis Ābelis (Latvia). The panel consisted of five former accession negotiators who shared their experience and lessons learned from their accession experience. The panel comprised: Mr. Mozammil Shinwari (Afghanistan), Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria), Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang (China), Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan) and Ambassador Indulis Ābelis (Latvia).
## WTO Accession Progress Tracker

### WTO Accessions 2019 — Evolving Work Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accession WP</th>
<th>WP Establishment</th>
<th>Last WP Meeting</th>
<th>State of Play</th>
<th>Upcoming Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> ALGERIA (DZA)**&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt; Chair: H.E. Mr. José Luis CANCELA GÓMEZ (Uruguay)</td>
<td>17 June 1987</td>
<td>14WPM, 31 March 2014</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP, AGSTs, LEG)</td>
<td>Circulation of updated inputs (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> ANDORRA (AND)</td>
<td>22 October 1997</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> AZERBAIJAN (AZE) Chair: H.E. Dr Walter WERNER (Germany)</td>
<td>16 July 1997</td>
<td>14WPM, 28 July 2017</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP, AGSTs, LEG)</td>
<td>- 15WPM (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> THE BAHAMAS (BHS) Chair: H.E. Mr. Andrew STAINES (United Kingdom)</td>
<td>18 July 2001</td>
<td>3WPM, 21 September 2018</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated inputs (MA Offers and Questionnaire STEs)</td>
<td>- 4WPM April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> BELARUS (BLR) Chair: H.E. Mr. Kemal MADENÇOĞLU (Turkey)</td>
<td>27 October 1993</td>
<td>10WPM, 15 May 2018</td>
<td>- Circulation of updated inputs December 2018 - 11WPM 15 February 2019 (WTO/ AIR/ACC/20 refers)</td>
<td>- Submission of questions by 15 March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> BHUTAN* (BTN) Chair: H.E. Dr. Elisabeth TICHY-FISLLBERGER (Austria)</td>
<td>6 October 1999</td>
<td>4WPM, 30 January 2008</td>
<td>No activity since 2008</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BIH) Chair: H.E. Mr. Atanas PAPARIZOV (Bulgaria)</td>
<td>15 July 1999</td>
<td>13WPM, 7 February 2018</td>
<td>- Preparation of replies and a revised DWPR</td>
<td>- Next/final WPM to be held in 2019 (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> COMOROS* (COM) Chair: H.E. Mr. Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA (Peru)</td>
<td>9 October 2007</td>
<td>4WPM, 28 March 2018</td>
<td>- Preparation of replies and other updated inputs</td>
<td>- Circulation of updated inputs, Q1 2019 - 5WPM (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> EQUATORIAL GUINEA (GNQ) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>5 February 2008</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of MFTR</td>
<td>- Secretariat’s TA mission to Malabo 5-7 March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> ETHIOPIA* (ETH) Chair: H.E. Mr Morten JESPERSEN (Denmark)</td>
<td>10 February 2003</td>
<td>3WPM, 27 March 2012</td>
<td>- Preparation of full range of updated inputs (LAP, AGST, all questionnaires and checklists, MA offers, as well as FS)</td>
<td>- 4WPM, Q2 2019 (TBC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * LDC — AGST (Agricultural Supporting Tables); CVQ (Customs Valuation Questionnaire); DWPR (Draft Working Party Report); FS (Factual Summary of Points Raised); ILQ (Import Licensing Questionnaire); LAP (Legislative Action Plan); LEG (legislation); MA (market access); MFTR (Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime); Q1 (1st quarter); STQ (State Trading Questionnaire); TA (technical assistance); WP (Working Party); WPM (Working Party meeting).
## WTO Accessions 2019 — Evolving Work Programme (Cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accession WP</th>
<th>WP Establishment</th>
<th>Last WP Meeting</th>
<th>State of Play</th>
<th>Upcoming Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Iran (IRN) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>26 May 2005</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated inputs (MFTR and MA offers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Iraq (IRQ) Chair: H.E. Mr. Omar HILALE (Morocco)</td>
<td>13 December 2004</td>
<td>2WPM, 2 April 2008</td>
<td>- Updated MFTR circulated in Feb. 2018. - Preparation of full range of updated inputs (replies, LAP, LEG, AGST, checklists and questionnaires, MA offers)</td>
<td>- 3WPM (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Lebanese Republic (LBN) Chair: Mr. Jean-Paul THUILLIER (France)</td>
<td>14 April 1999</td>
<td>7WPM, 28 October 2009</td>
<td>- Updated inputs (AGST, LAP, LEG, checklists and questionnaires, as well as DWPR) circulated to WP in April-June 2017 - Preparation of updated MA offers</td>
<td>- 8WPM (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Libya (LBY) Chair: Mr. Victor ECHEVARRIA UGARTE (Spain)</td>
<td>27 July 2004</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sao Tome and Principe* (STP) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>26 May 2005</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of MFTR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Serbia (SRB) Chair: H.E. Mrs Marie-Claire SWARD CAPRA (Sweden)</td>
<td>15 February 2005</td>
<td>13WPM, 13 June 2013</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated inputs (AGST, LAP, LEG as well as DWPR)</td>
<td>- Circulation of updated inputs in Q1 2019 (TBC) - 14WPM (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Somalia* (SOM) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>7 December 2016</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of MFTR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. South Sudan* (SSD) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>13 December 2017</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of replies on MFTR circulated in December 2018 as well as other inputs (LAP, LEG)</td>
<td>- 1WPM, 21 March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Sudan* (SDN) Chair: Mr. Katsuro NAGAI (Japan)</td>
<td>25 October 1994</td>
<td>4WPM, 14 July 2017</td>
<td>- Preparation of updated documentation (FS and other inputs) - Secretariat’s TA mission to Khartoum, 8-13 December 2018</td>
<td>- 5WPM in Q1 2019 (TBC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Syrian Arab Republic (SYR) Chair: Pending</td>
<td>4 May 2010</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Timor-Leste* (TLS) Chair: H.E. Mr. Pedro Nuno BÁRTOLO (Portugal)</td>
<td>7 December 2016</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>- Preparation of replies on MFTR circulated in July 2017, as well as other inputs (LAP, LEG, initial MA offers) - Secretariat’s TA mission to Dili, Q1 2019 (TBC) - 1WPM, 2019 (TBC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Uzbekistan (UZB) Chair: H.E. Ms PAIK Ji-ah (Republic of Korea)</td>
<td>21 December 1994</td>
<td>3WPM, 14 October 2005</td>
<td>- Preparation of complete set of updated inputs (MFTR, LAP, LEG, AGST, all other questionnaires and checklists, MA offers) - Circulation of updated inputs, Q1 2019 (TBC) - Chair’s visit Q1 2019 (TBC) - 4WPM in Q2 2019 (TBC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * LDC - AGST (Agricultural Supporting Tables); CVQ (Customs Valuation Questionnaire); DWPR (Draft Working Party Report); FS (Factual Summary of Points Raised); ILQ (Import Licensing Questionnaire); LAP (Legislative Action Plan); LEG (legislation); MA (market access); MFTR (Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime); Q1 (1st quarter); STQ (State Trading Questionnaire); TA (technical assistance); WP (Working Party); WPM (Working Party meeting).
ACCESSIONS ANNIVERSARY DATES — ARTICLE XII MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article XII Member</th>
<th>Membership date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JANUARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Taipei</td>
<td>1 January 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>11 January 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>21 January 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>29 January 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEBRUARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao People’s Democratic Republic</td>
<td>2 February 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>5 February 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>10 February 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous WTO Accessions newsletters:

- December 2018
- November 2018
- September/October 2018