

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

Accessions Strategic Objectives

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

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Mr Rajesh Aggarwal (ITC) and Mr Katsuro Nagai (Japan)



8th China Round Table on WTO Accessions Moscow, Russian Federation 4-5 December 2019



The Secretariat organised the Eighth China Round Table on WTO Accessions in Moscow on 4-5 December 2019, in partnership with the Government of the Russian Federation. The theme of this year's Round Table was "Accessions and WTO Reform: on the Road to MC12".



Ambassador ZHANG Xiangchen (China)

Over 100 officials actively took part in the 2-day conference. They included the Chief Negotiators and negotiators from 11 acceding governments (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Serbia, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan), as well as representatives from nine Article XII Members (Afghanistan, Armenia, Bulgaria, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Panama, Russian Federation and Tajikistan) and two governments with interest in accession (Curaçao and Turkmenistan). Other participants included those of original WTO Members, Working Party Chairpersons and experts from partner institutions.

In addition to the discussions on Accessions and WTO Reform, the Round Table reviewed the state of play in ongoing accessions, and their synergies and coherence with parallel regional integration efforts. Here are some of the highlights from the outcome document (in document WT/ACC/35):

- ◆ The results of accession negotiations could provide possible direction and inspiration for the ongoing debates on WTO Reform, *inter alia* in the areas of transparency, domestic support, and the use of targeted flexibilities in response to specific development needs.
- ◆ The Round Table welcomed the progress to date and urged acceleration of the ongoing 22 accessions, while acknowledging the various challenges faced by each acceding government. In particular, Round Table participants encouraged further progress in the accessions of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Comoros, towards their finalisation in 2020, including as possible deliverables for the upcoming MC12.
- ◆ They also acknowledged the ongoing activation and re-activation efforts by several acceding governments including Azerbaijan, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanese Republic, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan - which aim to hold their respective Working Party meetings in 2020.
- ◆ The Round Table stressed the importance of synergies and coherence in the parallel processes of regional integration and WTO accession, in support of the foreign policy goals and economic reform agenda of acceding governments.



Ms Ekaterina Mayorova (Russian Federation)



8th China Round Table on WTO Accessions Moscow, Russian Federation 4-5 December 2019 (cont'd)

◆ All participating governments expressed a sense of responsibility for the multilateral trading system, while acknowledging that it is currently facing severe threats from unilateralism and protectionism. In this context, the Round Table welcomed the preparatory efforts towards MC12 by WTO Members, including by Kazakhstan as host of the Conference. Participants stressed the importance of deliverables at MC12 to sustain the credibility of the multilateral trading system.

The programme, statements and presentations made at the Eighth China Round Table are available at the dedicated webpage [here](#).

Following the China Round Table, a meeting of the Informal Group of Acceding Governments took place on 6 December. Chaired by Belarus,

coordinator of the Group, the meeting reviewed the work of the Group, which had been established in March 2018 for Geneva-based delegates from acceding governments. The Group, which met for the first time at the level of capital-based senior officials, also discussed the possibility of holding its meeting at the Ministerial level during MC12 in Nur-Sultan.

On the margins of the China Round Table, Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff held bilateral meetings with Mr. Maxim Oreshkin, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation and Ms. Veronika Nikishina, Trade Minister of the Eurasian Economic Commission. He also delivered a lecture on "WTO 2.0" at the Higher School of Economics to a group of over 100 masters students specialised in WTO studies.



Meeting between DDG Alan Wolff and Minister Maxim Oreshkin (Russian Federation)



Meeting between DDG Alan Wolff and Trade Minister Veronika Nikishina (EEC)

Accession Strategic Focus

Comoros: On 2 December, the Secretariat participated in a high-level event -*Conférence des partenaires au développement de l'Union des Comores*, jointly organized by the Government of Comoros and the World Bank in Paris and delivered a statement on the relevance of WTO Accession to Comoros' strategic development plan.

On the margins of the conference, the Secretariat met with key Comorian government officials including: Mr. Houmed M'Saidié, Minister of Economy, Investments and Energy, in charge of Economic Integration, Tourism, Crafts and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession; Mr. Said Chayhane, Minister of Finance; Mr. Souef Mohamed El Amine, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Djounaid Soilihi, State Secretary for the Civil Service; and, Mr. Kamalidine Souef, Director General of the Customs Office. They provided reassurances of the Government's commitment to undertake necessary actions to finalize the accession process in 2020.



"Conférence des partenaires au développement de l'Union des Comores", Paris, 2 December 2019

On the technical front, the Secretariat is currently finalising updates to the draft Report of the Working Party, in consultation with Moroni. The circulation of all negotiating inputs, including revised market access offers, is envisaged for January 2020, with the 5th meeting of the Working Party planned for March.

Belarus: At the Eighth China Round Table, Chief Negotiator Vladimir Serpikov said that an early conclusion of Belarus' accession negotiations remained one of the top priorities for his Government, whose goal was to become a full-fledged member of the WTO by MC12.

In preparation for the next meeting of the Working Party, the Secretariat is finalising the draft Report of the Working Party, in consultation with Minsk. The circulation of all negotiating inputs to the Working Party is scheduled for early January 2020, and the 13th meeting is currently envisaged to take place during the second half of February.

On the bilateral front, on 2 December, Belarus signed a bilateral protocol with Australia, concluding its market access negotiation on goods. On 11-13 December, Chief Negotiator Vladimir Serpikov was in Geneva to further advance the remaining negotiations with a few Members.



Signing bilateral protocol between Belarus and Australia
— 2 December 2019 © <http://geneva.mfa.gov.by>

Bosnia and Herzegovina: On the margins of the Eighth China Round Table, Chief Negotiator Hamdo Tinjak met with Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria), Chairperson of the Working Party, and the Secretariat to take stock of the domestic state of play in the accession process. Following the appointment of Mr. Zoran Tegeltija, as new Chairperson of the Council of Ministers on 19 November, there was optimism that rapid progress could be made on all outstanding issues, including Bosnia and Herzegovina's last bilateral market access negotiation with one Member. They agreed to stay in close contact in early 2020 after the confirmation of a full Council of Ministers.



Chief Negotiator Hamdo Tinjak (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Once the outstanding issues are resolved, the Secretariat will begin the consolidation of all market access agreements concluded between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Members and finalise the draft Report of the Working Party in consultation with Sarajevo.

Serbia: At the Eighth China Round Table, Chief Negotiator Olivera Jocić reported that Belgrade was engaged with Members to advance outstanding bilateral market access negotiations, even though progress was yet to be made on the outstanding legislative action i.e. enactment of the WTO-consistent GMO legislation to resume the Working Party.

Accession State of Play — LDCs

Ethiopia: At the Eighth China Round Table, Chief Negotiator Mamo E. Mihretu, reported that Ethiopia viewed the WTO accession as an integral part of its broader reforms. The WTO accession would serve as an external anchor for Ethiopia's internal reforms and would be a natural and logical outcome of the unilateral domestic reform process.



Meeting between DDG Alan Wolff and Chief Negotiator Mamo E. Mihretu (Ethiopia)

Between 6 and 13 December, Ethiopia circulated 13 documents to the Working Party, including market access offers, the Agricultural Supporting Tables, the Legislative Action Plan and legislation, and various checklists and questionnaires.

Following the circulation, Ambassador Morten Jespersen (Denmark) proposed to hold the fourth meeting of the Working Party on 30 January 2020. This would be the first meeting since March 2012. The negotiating team will be led by Chief Negotiator Mamo E. Mihretu.

Sudan: On the margins of the Eighth China Round Table, Dr Yassin Eisa Mohamed, Secretary-General of the National Secretariat for Sudan's Accession to the WTO, met with Mr. Katsuro Nagai (Japan), Chairperson of the Working Party. Dr. Yassin conveyed the invitation of Mr. Madani Abbas Madani, Minister of Industry and Trade of Sudan, to the Chairperson to visit Khartoum in January 2020. The purpose of this visit would be to meet with officials of the new Government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to discuss steps for an early resumption.



Meeting between Mr Katsuro Nagai and Dr Yassin Eisa Mohamed (Sudan)

On the technical front, the Secretariat plans to update the Factual Summary of Points Raised, last prepared in January 2019, after it receives necessary information, including the draft Budget 2020. The new version of the Factual Summary will be the basis for discussion at the next meeting of the Working Party in 2020.

Timor-Leste: During the Eighth China Round Table, the Secretariat met with a delegation from Dili. The team informed the Secretariat about the appointment of Mr. Fidélis Leite Magalhães, Minister for Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs, Acting Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Acting Minister for Tourism, Commerce and Industry, as a new Chief Negotiator for WTO accession.

Timor-Leste is keen to re-start the accession process which had been stalled following the submission of the Memorandum of the Foreign Trade Regime in June 2017. With the new team in place, Dili is committed to finalizing the necessary inputs to hold the first meeting of the Working Party as soon as possible.

As part of the activation of the Working Party, a visit of Ambassador Rui Macieira (Portugal), Chairperson of the Working Party, to Dili is planned during the first quarter 2020 to establish contacts with Minister Magalhães and other officials in the Government.



Meeting with Delegation of Timor-Leste at the 8th China Round Table

Azerbaijan: During the week of 16 December, a delegation from Baku, led by Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, visited Geneva. The main objective of the visit was to advance bilateral market access negotiations with Members.



Meeting with Delegation of Azerbaijan — 17 December 2019

The delegation also met with the Secretariat to exchange views on the preparation of an updated draft Report of the Working Party, in light of the inputs received from Baku in October, as well as on the timing of the next meeting of the Working Party.

The Secretariat has been invited to attend a workshop on WTO accession in Baku on 21 January 2020.

Accession State of Play — Non-LDCs

informed that Malabo was working to finalise the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime by the end of February 2020 for circulation to the Working Party. The accession Working Party was established 11 years ago. Equatorial Guinea is thus keen to hold its first meeting as early possible.

Equatorial Guinea is the only member of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) that is outside of the WTO. Currently, the WTO Secretariat is preparing the next Trade Policy Review of CEMAC whose meeting is scheduled for 27 and 29 October 2020. Synergies between the two exercises are being explored.

Iran: On 17 December, a delegation from Tehran, comprising of 9 officials from the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited the WTO. This visit was part of the participation in the EU-Iran Trade Development Project being implemented with the ITC. The Accessions Division delivered a presentation on WTO accessions and engaged in discussions on various topical issues with the delegation.



Meeting with Delegation of Iran — 17 December 2019

Uzbekistan: On the margins of the Eighth China Round Table, Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade and Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, informed the Secretariat that Tashkent was working to finalise the remaining documents for circulation to the Working Party in early 2020. He expressed Uzbekistan's desire to officially resume the Working Party process in the spring of 2020.

Expression of Interest: Curaçao

Further to the circulation of Curaçao's request to accede to the WTO pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement as an independent customs territory, Ms. Giselle Mc William, Minister of Economic Development of Curaçao, made a short statement at the General Council on 9 December. Two Members stated that they would require more time to review the request before they could support the establishment of an accession Working Party. Consultations will continue until the next meeting of the General Council, scheduled for 3-4 March 2020.



Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities

Training Course on Goods Schedules for WTO Accession, 18-22 November 2019

The Secretariat organized a five-day training course on Goods Schedules for acceding governments from 18 to 22 November 2019. 20 officials from 12 acceding governments (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Ethiopia, Lebanese Republic, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uzbekistan) attended the week-long course, together with officials from three WTO Members.

The advanced course provided in-depth training on accession related aspects of trade in goods,

including scheduling techniques, discourses on commitments and concessions in goods market access as well as experience sharing sessions where participants could interact with WTO Members involved in accession negotiations.

In addition, former negotiators from four recently acceded Members - Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Montenegro, and Yemen shared their experiences in the market access negotiations and offered advice to the acceding governments.



Participants of the Training Course on Goods Schedules for WTO Accession

UPCOMING EVENTS

The 3rd Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for Africa, Addis Ababa, 12 – 14 February 2020

The Secretariat will organize the Third Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for Africa from 12 to 14 February 2020. The event will take place in Addis Ababa, at the United Nations Conference Centre. Partners for this activity are the African Union Commission (AUC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Economic

Commission for Africa (UNECA), the World Bank and the Government of Ethiopia.

The thematic focus will be "Economic Transformation through WTO Membership and AfCFTA Implementation". The target participants are government officials responsible for WTO accession and private sector representatives from African acceding governments.



Mr Mamo Mihretu (Ethiopia), Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession

Celebrating the life of Chiedu Osakwe, our former Director (1955-2019)



On 25 November 2019, the Accessions Division organised a memorial event to celebrate the life of our former Director Mr. Chiedu Osakwe, who passed away on 22 September 2019 after a short period of illness. Many friends and colleagues who worked closely with Chiedu during his time as Accessions Director between 2009 and 2016, sent their tributes and memories about the Accessions Godfather.

Below are some of the tributes paid to Chiedu at the memorial service:

"Chiedu had single-minded passion for the trading system and had a religious-like faith in its core values of "fairness" - non-discrimination, open competition and the rule of law, which were also fundamental to his own belief. He worked for the system, worked on it, and work with it, from within and from outside, to make it work for all, especially for developing countries and those countries left outside the system".

Amb. Dr. Amina C. Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and Heritage of Kenya

"He was not only an extremely proficient person in his profession at the WTO accession area but also had the heart and passion for helping small and vulnerable countries. Without his highly reliable advice and support, Samoa would not have acceded the WTO earlier than its expected timeline."

Mr. Auelua Sam Enari, Former Chief Trade Negotiator for Samoa

"Chiedu outlined a brilliant plan for Russia's accession to the WTO and supported us throughout the process until its completion. His understanding of how the WTO system works was outstanding."

Mr. Maxim Medvedkov, Former Chief WTO Negotiator of the Russian Federation

"Chiedu treated Seychelles like any other country. This is what distinguishes a great international civil servant — when you can distinguish a small country and treat it like any other. Chiedu treated Seychelles' cause in the WTO just like he would have treated a large country's cause."

Mr. Pierre Laporte, Ex-Finance, Trade and Investment Minister of the Seychelles

"He always said that the Accessions Division was [one of] the best place he worked during his career".

Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division

"I enjoyed [an] excellent working relationship with Chiedu when he was the head of the Accessions Division, He was extremely resourceful, he had a lot of humour, highly intelligent, he was a tour-de-force. "

Mr. Stefan Haukur Jóhannesson, Former Working Party Chairperson on the Accession of the Russian Federation



*Season's Greetings
and Best Wishes for
the New Year 2020!*

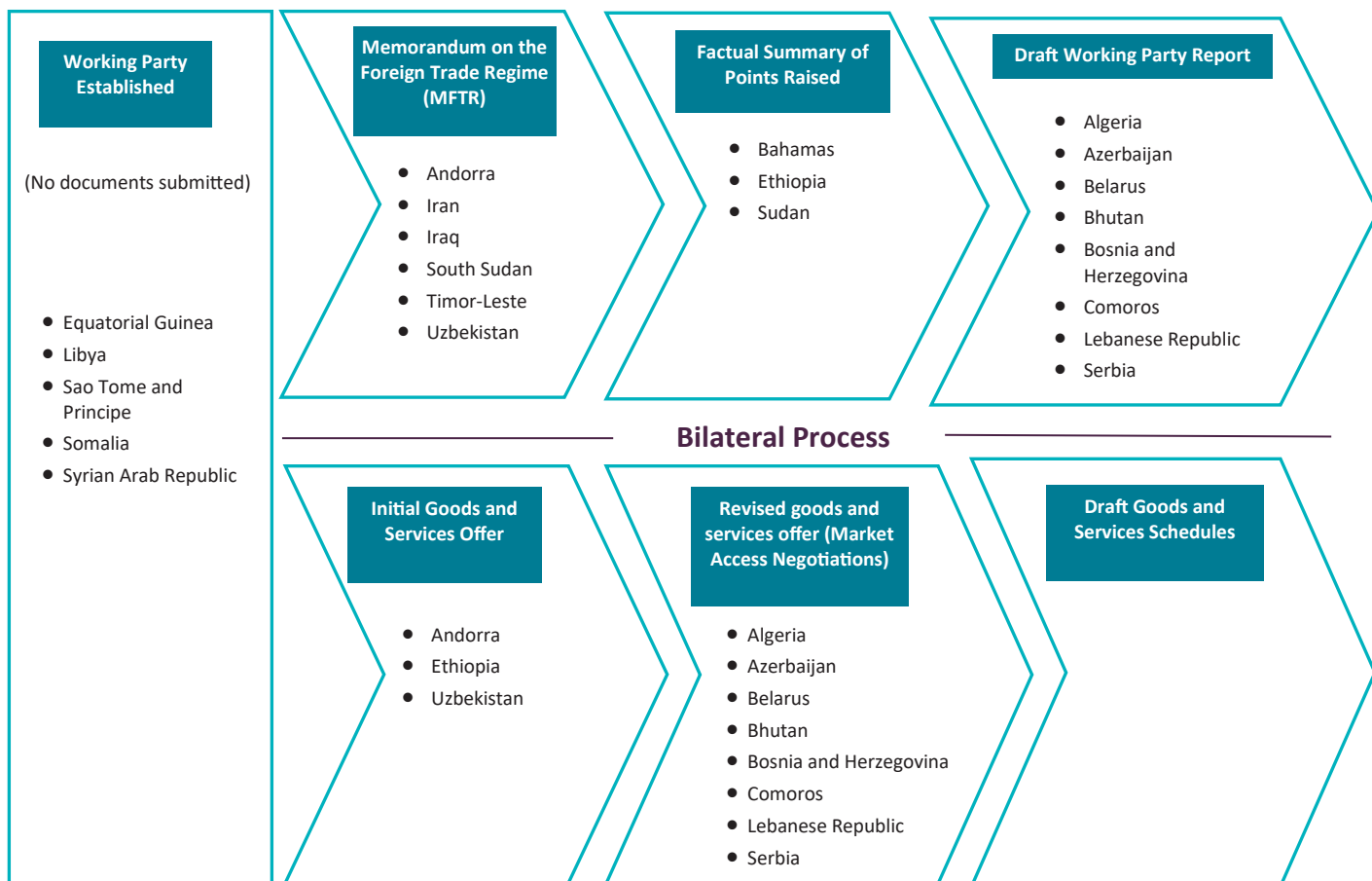


ACCESSIONS DIVISION



WTO Accession Progress Tracker

Multilateral Process



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting — 28 May 2019

WTO Accessions 2019 — Evolving Work Programme

Accession WP	WP Establishment	Last WP Meeting	State of Play	Upcoming Activity
1. ALGERIA (DZA) Chair: H.E. Mr. José Luís CANCELA GÓMEZ (Uruguay)	17 June 1987	14WPM, 31 March 2014	- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP, AGSTs, LEG)	
2. ANDORRA (AND)	22 October 1997		Inactive	
3. AZERBAIJAN (AZE) Chair: H.E. Dr. Walter WERNER (Germany)	16 July 1997	14WPM, 28 July 2017	- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP, AGSTs, LEG)	- Secretariat's visit to Baku, 21 January - 15WPM (Q1 2020)
4. THE BAHAMAS (BHS) Chair: H.E. Mr. Andrew STAINES (United Kingdom)	18 July 2001	4WPM, 5 April 2019	- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, EDWPR)	- 5WPM (TBC)
5. BELARUS (BLR) Chair: H.E. Mr. Kemal MADENOĞLU (Turkey)	27 October 1993	12WPM, 10 July 2019	- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP, LEG, AGST)	- 13 WPM (Q1 2020)
6. BHUTAN* (BTN) Chair: H.E. Dr. Elisabeth TICHY-FISSELBERGER (Austria)	6 October 1999	4WPM, 30 January 2008	No activity since 2008	
7. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BIH) Chair: H.E. Mr. Atanas PAPANIZOV (Bulgaria)	15 July 1999	13WPM, 7 February 2018	- Preparation of updated inputs (replies, LAP as well as DWPR)	- Next/final WPM to be held in 2020 (TBC)
8. COMOROS* (COM) Chair: H.E. Mr. Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA (Peru)	9 October 2007	4WPM, 28 March 2018	- Preparation updated inputs (replies, LAP as well as DWPR)	- 5WPM (Q1 2020)
9. EQUATORIAL GUINEA (GNQ) Chair: Pending	5 February 2008	No WPM held to date	- Preparation of MFTR	- Secretariat's TA mission to Malabo (TBC)
10. ETHIOPIA* (ETH) Chair: H.E. Mr. Morten JESPERSEN (Denmark)	10 February 2003	3WPM, 27 March 2012	- Preparation of full range of updated inputs (LAP, LEG, AGST, all questionnaires and checklists, MA offers, as well as FS)	- 4WPM, January 2020
11. IRAN (IRN) Chair: Pending	26 May 2005	No WPM held to date	- Preparation of updated inputs (MFTR and MA offers)	
12. IRAQ (IRQ) Chair: H.E. Mr. Omar HILALE (Morocco)	13 December 2004	2WPM, 2 April 2008	- Updated MFTR circulated in Feb. 2018. - Preparation of full range of updated inputs (replies, LAP, LEG, AGST, checklists and questionnaires, MA offers)	- TA Mission in Baghdad (TBC)
13. LEBANESE REPUBLIC (LBN) Chair: Mr. Jean-Paul THUILLIER (France)	14 April 1999	7WPM, 28 October 2009	- Updated inputs (AGST, LAP, LEG, checklists and questionnaires, as well as DWPR) circulated to WP in April-June 2017 - Preparation of updated MA offers	
14. LIBYA (LBY) Chair: Mr. Victor ECHEVARRÍA UGARTE (Spain)	27 July 2004	No WPM held to date	Inactive	
15. SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE* (STP) Chair: Pending	26 May 2005	No WPM held to date	- Preparation of MFTR	
16. SERBIA (SRB) Chair: H.E. Mrs Marie-Claire SWÄRD CAPRA (Sweden)	15 February 2005	13WPM, 13 June 2013	- Preparation of updated inputs (AGST, LAP, LEG as well as DWPR)	- 14WPM (TBC)
17. SOMALIA* (SOM) Chair: Pending	7 December 2016	No WPM held to date	- Preparation of MFTR	
18. SOUTH SUDAN* (SSD) Chair: H.E. Mr. Mohammad Qurban HAQJO (Afghanistan)	13 December 2017	1WPM, 21 March 2019	- Preparation of updated MFTR, as well as other inputs (replies, checklists, LAP, LEG, initial MA offers)	- TA WTO/ITC mission - 2WPM (TBC)
19. SUDAN* (SDN) Chair: Mr. Katsuro NAGAI (Japan)	25 October 1994	4WPM, 14 July 2017	- Updated inputs circulated (AGSTs, LAP, LEG, as well as FS) circulated in Jan 2019	- WP Chair visit to Khartoum, end January 2020 - 5WPM in 2020 (TBC)
20. SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC (SYR) Chair: Pending	4 May 2010	No WPM held to date	Inactive	
21. TIMOR-LESTE* (TLS) Chair: H.E. Mr. Rui MACIEIRA (Portugal)	7 December 2016	No WPM held to date	- Preparation of replies on MFTR circulated in July 2017, as well as other inputs (LAP, LEG, initial MA offers)	- Chair's visit to Dili, Q1 2020 (TBC) - 1WPM, 2020 (TBC)
22. UZBEKISTAN (UZB) Chair: H.E. Ms. PAIK Ji-ah (Republic of Korea)	21 December 1994	3WPM, 14 October 2005	- Preparation of replies on MFTR circulated on 25 July as well as other inputs (LAP, LEG, AGST, all other questionnaires and checklists, MA offers)	- 4WPM in Q2 2020 (TBC)

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).

