



WTO twentieth Anniversary Accessions programme

SECOND GLOBAL SEMINAR ON WTO ACCESSIONS
SAUDI ARABIA 10-YEAR WTO ACCESSION SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY SESSION
ACCESSIONS BOOK LAUNCH BY WTO DIRECTOR-GENERAL ROBERTO AZEVEDO

Statement by H.E. Dr. Abdullah A. Al-Obaid, Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry for Foreign Trade, Saudi Arabia

*Saudi Arabia Special Anniversary Session: 10 Years of WTO Membership:
Looking back and Looking Ahead*

Geneva, Tuesday, 29 September 2015, 11:20 – 11:30, Room D

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I would like to join Minister Alrabiah in thanking you for participating in this event to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization. We are pleased to have been a Member of this great Organization for the past decade.
2. Our focus today on 10 years of Saudi membership must be placed in the context of the 20 years of the WTO existence. As we take stock of the role that Saudi Arabia has taken in the WTO, we also consider the important role that the WTO itself has played in supporting international trade and the economic development of its Members.
3. In my remarks, I would like to provide more details about the day-to-day work of the WTO that the Kingdom has contributed to and supported for the past 10 years. The Kingdom is of the view that, by focusing on the strengths of the WTO, Members can push our Organization to overcome current challenges and take the multilateral trade system to the next level.
4. Saudi Arabia has been an active member in the daily work of the WTO in Geneva. Since our accession, we have taken a proactive role in a wide range of issues in the DDA negotiations, including agriculture, rules, trade facilitation, non-agricultural market access (NAMA), trade in services, trade and environment and trade and development. We also have become a regular third party in dispute settlement; supported the monitoring function of the WTO's trade policy reviews; and participated in accessions negotiations. I will speak about each of these key areas of activity in the WTO.



5. Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of trade and investment liberalization to achieve its policy objectives and believes strongly that our WTO membership sends a strong message to potential trading partners about our commitment to a rules-based system.
6. Our bound market access commitments confirmed Saudi Arabia's position among the most open economies of WTO Members. We have bound 100% of our tariff lines; undertook very broad commitments in all services sectors under the GATS; and grant at least most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment to all our trading partners.
7. Saudi Arabia strongly supports efforts to bring the DDA negotiations to a successful conclusion and believes that core WTO benefits such as: legal certainty, transparent and fair rules of mutual benefit should be at the forefront of Members' thinking in moving the DDA to a conclusion. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia spared no effort to participate effectively in the negotiations over the main issues that led the agenda at the ninth Bali ministerial conference and persists to show its devotion and hard work with other WTO members to making out of the December 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Conference a success.
8. We are also of the opinion that the regionalization would help integrating the country in the global economy. To do so, we concluded regional and free-trade agreements, within the framework of the GCC, with different trading partners and also involved in trade negotiations with other trading partners.
9. In Dispute settlement, the Kingdom has gained a substantial amount of experience in the WTO's renowned and efficient dispute settlement system. While Saudi Arabia has thus far avoided any complaints being brought against it and we have not faced the necessity of initiating a dispute with another Member, the Kingdom has actively participated as a third party in 28 disputes. Our third party participation has allowed us to become familiar with the rules and procedures of panels and the Appellate Body and thus we have focused on interventions concerning issues of systemic importance for Saudi economic development and industrial policy.
10. When it comes to Trade Policy Review, since 2005, the Kingdom has been the subject of one TPR in January 2012, and we are already preparing for our second Review which is scheduled for April 2016. The 2012 TPR of Saudi Arabia was a successful review which highlighted the strengths of the Saudi economy, especially as it remained vibrant and open in the face of the macroeconomic crisis of 2008-2009.



11. Regarding WTO Accessions, 13 countries completed their accession negotiations¹ (and another is likely to conclude this year²) since Saudi Arabia's accession in 2005. Saudi Arabia has supported the enlargement of the WTO through the addition of new Members and, in particular, has been active as a member of the Working Parties on the accessions of many recently acceded members.

12. The Kingdom notes that 22 countries are currently in various stages of their accession process. We are eager to see progress on these negotiations and particularly supportive of the accession of Arab countries and members of the Islamic Conference Organization.

13. Saudi Arabia clearly recognizes the centrality of development in the work of the WTO and the need for positive efforts to ensure that developing countries, and especially the least-developed ones, get their share in the growth of international trade. Its contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework to help the LDCs using trade as a tool for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction is a clear proof of the Kingdom's commitment to support the development dimension.

14. Saudi Arabia has been also active in a wide range of WTO bodies over the past 10 years. Our diplomats in Geneva have assumed leadership positions of WTO bodies. They chaired three main WTO bodies since 2013: the services Council, the Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology and this year the TRIPS Council, and two subsidiary bodies: the Working Party of GATS rules and the Committee on Trade in Financial Services in 2014 and 2015. These leadership roles are a natural outgrowth of our longstanding support of the work of these and other WTO bodies.

15. Regarding our activities in negotiating fora, Saudi Arabia as a member of the G20, has an active role when it comes to boosting trade growth and supporting the multilateral trading system. We are also an active member in four groups: Arab Group, Asian Developing Members, Recently Acceded Members and the Informal Group of Developing Countries. Being a member in these groups allows the Kingdom to work constructively with other members to support each other in areas of shared views and common interest especially the joint desire to see the DDA through to a successful conclusion.

¹ Seychelles, Yemen, Tajikistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vanuatu, Russian Federation, Samoa, Montenegro, Cape Verde, Ukraine, Tonga, Viet Nam, and Kazakhstan.

² Liberia.



16. Saudi Arabia fully supports the WTO and multilateral efforts to promote free and fair trade. Regional or bilateral cooperation may serve a useful function, but it cannot and indeed should not replace coordination at the multilateral level. For this reason, the Kingdom reiterates its commitment to the swift and successful conclusion to the DDA. By doubling down on the WTO's strengths of monitoring trade policy and settling disputes, and supporting progress in negotiations in the DDA, we see a positive road forward toward the sustainable economic development that the WTO has proven it can engender.

17. Thank you.
