OVERVIEW OF WTO ACCESSIONS AND STATE OF PLAY OF THE ARAB REGION

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World Trade Organization
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Outline of Presentation

• Why join the WTO?
• Basic procedures for the Accession process
• Achievements to date
• The state of play in ongoing accessions and Arab accessions
Why join the WTO?

- WTO = BRAND NAME
- TRADE FOR PEACE
- RULE OF LAW
- DOMESTIC REFORMS
- POLICY PREDICTABILITY / TRANSPARENCY
- PARTICIPATION IN MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS + RULE-MAKING
- ENHANCED MARKET ACCESS
- INSURANCE AGAINST PROTECTIONISM
Basic Procedures

WTO ACCESSION: LEGAL BASIS

Article XII of the Agreement Establishing the WTO (the Marrakesh Agreement)

1. Any State or separate customs territory possessing full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and the other matters provided for in this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements may accede to this Agreement, on terms to be agreed between it and the WTO. Such accession shall apply to this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements annexed thereto.

2. Decisions on accession shall be taken by the Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial Conference shall approve the agreement on the terms of accession by a two-thirds majority of the Members of the WTO.
The accession procedures are outlined in WT/ACC/22/Rev.1, a document developed by the Secretariat in consultation with Members as a practical, non-binding guide.
Multilateral Negotiations

Fact-finding Phase
- Submission of MFTR, Legislative Action Plan, action plans for implementation of specific agreements
- First set of Questions and Responses
- First Working Party meeting

Negotiating Phase
- Additional Questions and Replies
- Further Working Party meetings
- Factual Summary of Points Raised

Draft Working Party Report
- Attached with draft Decision and draft Protocol on Accession
High Level Regional Dialogue for WTO Accessions for the Arab Region, 8-10 November 2020

Bilateral Negotiations

Bilateral Contacts

Submission of Initial Offers

• Generally submitted after the first Working Party meeting
• Any Member may request Bilateral Negotiations based on these offers

Revision of Offers, Further negotiations

Bilateral Agreement

• Reviewed by signatories at the Technical Verification Meeting
• Annexed to the Working Party Report
• Becomes part of the Accession Package

Draft Goods and Services Schedule

• Signed in three copies
• Signed agreement must be deposited with the Secretariat
STAGE 3: FINAL STEPS

- Adoption of the Accession Package by Working Party
- General Council/Ministerial Conference approval
- Domestic ratification /acceptance
- Membership

THE ACCESSION PACKAGE

1. Decision
   - Protocol
3. Schedule of Concessions & Commitments on Goods
4. Schedule of Specific Commitments on Services
3. Achievements to date
Map of WTO Members and Observers

Turkmenistan: Observer since July 2020
What has been done so far?
36 accessions completed to date
(By accession date)
WTO ACCESSIONS RESULTS TO DATE

- **36 accessions**, including from **9 LDCs**, have been concluded between 1996 and 2016
  - Last Members joined in July 2016, i.e. Afghanistan and Liberia
  - Article XII Members account for over **20% of WTO membership**
  - Additional **18%** of world trade covered by WTO rules - today, **98.1%** world trade conducted under WTO

- Average length of accession: **10 years and 2 months** (but **12 years and 2 months** for LDCs)
  - Shortest: **2 years and 8 months** (Kyrgyz Republic, 1998)
  - Longest: **19 years and 9 months** (Kazakhstan and Seychelles, 2015)

- **4 Arab Accessions** concluded to date:
  - Kingdom of Jordan (joined in April 2000): **6 years and 3 months**
  - The Sultanate of Oman (joined in November 2000): **4 years and 5 months**
  - The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (joined in December 2005): **12 years and 5 months**
  - Yemen (joined in 26 June 2014): **13 years and 11 months**
4. The State of Play of Accessions and Arab Accessions
What remains to be done?
23 ongoing accessions, plus ....
(By application date)
Accession negotiations – state of play

Multilateral negotiations (Rules)

Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime
- Andorra
- Iran
- Iraq
- Somalia*
- South Sudan*
- Timor-Leste*
- Uzbekistan

Factual Summary of Points Raised
- Bahamas
- Ethiopia*
- Sudan*

Draft Working Party Report
- Algeria
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Bhutan*
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Comoros*
- Serbia

Bilateral negotiations (Market Access)

Initial Goods & Services Offer
- Andorra

Revised Goods & Services Offer
- Algeria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Belarus
- Bhutan*
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Comoros*
- Ethiopia*
- Serbia
- Sudan*
- Uzbekistan

Draft Goods and Services Schedules
- Turkmenistan
- Curacao
- Equatorial Guinea
- Libya
- Sao Tome and Principe*
- Syrian Arab Rep.

Observer
- Turkmenistan

Working Party Established

Note:
* LDC
Eight (8) on-going Accessions in the Arab Region

- Algeria (1987)
- Sudan (1994)*
- Lebanese Republic (1999)
- Syrian Arab Republic (2001)
- Iraq (2004)
- Libya (2004)
- Comoros (2007)*
- Somalia (2016)*

Notes: * LDCs
### Arab Accessions by Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Status</th>
<th>Accession WP (establishment)</th>
<th>Last WPM</th>
<th>Next envisaged WPM (based on Secretariat’s assessment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic focus 2020</strong></td>
<td>Comoros* (2007)</td>
<td>5WPM, September 2020</td>
<td>Q1 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work in progress</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>On-going efforts to move the WP process</em></td>
<td>Sudan* (1994)</td>
<td>4WPM, July 2017</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reactivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>On-going efforts to resume the WP process after at least 5 years</em></td>
<td>Iraq (2004)</td>
<td>2WPM, April 2008</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lebanese Republic (1999)</td>
<td>7WPM, October 2009</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Efforts to start the WP process with MFTR</em></td>
<td>Somalia* (2016)</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inactive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No WP held at least during last 5 years</em></td>
<td>Algeria (1987)</td>
<td>14 WPM, March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Libya (2004)</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic (2010)</td>
<td>No WPM held to date</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** * LDCs
Accession State of Play of Arab Countries

Multilateral negotiations (Rules)
- Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime
  - Iraq
  - Somalia*

Factual Summary of Points Raised
- Sudan*

Draft Working Party Report
- Algeria
- Comoros*

Bilateral negotiations (Market Access)
- Initial Goods & Services Offer
  - Algeria
  - Comoros*
  - Sudan*

- Revised Goods & Services Offer
- Draft Goods and Services Schedules

Note: * LDC

Working Party Established
- Libya
- Syrian Arab Rep.

(No documents submitted)
Average Length of ongoing Arab Accessions

Average: 17 Years and 7 Months
## Accession in numbers: Ongoing-Arab Accessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceding Government (Working Party establishment)</th>
<th>Number of WP meeting(s) held</th>
<th>Number of documents issued to the WP+</th>
<th>Number of questions replied to by Acceeding Governments+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria (1987)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan* (1994)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>917</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanese Republic (1999)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>474</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic (2001)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya (2004)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq (2004)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>638</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros* (2007)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia* (2016)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * LDC  
+ Based on the documents circulated to the Working Party, not including the documents which are currently processed by the Secretariat.
Frequency of commitments undertaken by Article XII Members
Policy Framework for LDC Accessions

❖ 2002 General Council Guidelines for LDCs’ Accessions (WT/L/508)
  – Market Access, WTO Rules, Process, technical assistance

❖ 2012 General Council Decision to “strengthen, streamline and operationalize” the 2002 Guidelines” (WT/L/508/Add.1)
  – Benchmarks on market access on Goods and Services
  – Transparency in accession negotiations
  – “Facilitation” by Chairs of SCLDC & Accession Working Parties
  – Special and differential treatment & transition periods
  – Technical assistance and capacity building
WTO accessions: new “themes”

A larger number of active accessions
- New applications – Somalia, Timor-Leste, South Sudan, Curaçao (+ Turkmenistan)
- Resumption of accession Working Parties after some years of inactivity

Increased role for technical assistance?
- Members’ broad support for WTO accessions, at WP level or through technical assistance
- Strong interest & support from international partners, e.g. IMF, World Bank, ITC, Arab Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank

Fragility and conflict (trade as an engine of peace?)
Best practices for Accession process

• Establish a clear domestic structure to support the accession process & build capacity of the negotiating team – national coordination – Road Map

• Early identification of benefits and interests, which should be reflected in a negotiating strategy

• Impact assessment of WTO Membership

• Assessment of trade-related legislation and practices to determine conformity with WTO rules

• Establishment of a national steering committee (e.g. ministries, private sector, and civil society representatives)

• Identification of a 'model accession’

• Use of technical assistance & capacity building
Q&A session