

## **ACCESSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**

H.E. MR. RODERICK VAN SCHREVEN (netherlands),  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE WORKING PARTY  
REPORT TO THE TENTH WTO MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE

17 DECEMBER 2015

1. Thank you Madam Chairperson.
2. As Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I am honoured to present this Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, the "Report of the Working Party".
3. As I present this Report, I am honoured to join the Ministerial Conference in welcoming H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khan, First Deputy Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Delegation of Afghanistan and Members of the Negotiating Team.
4. The Working Party was established on 13 December 2004 to examine Afghanistan's request for WTO accession. As of today, the accession

process of Afghanistan has taken 11 years and 4 days.

5. The Working Party held five (5) formal meetings. I had the pleasure to chair four (4) of them, including the final Working Party meeting held on 11 November.
6. The results of the accession negotiations are contained in the following three documents:
  - The Report of the Working Party, circulated in document WT/ACC/AFG/36 - WT/MIN/(15)/6;
  - The Schedule of Concessions and Commitments on Goods, contained in document WT/ACC/AFG/36 - WT/MIN(15)/6/Add.1; and,
  - The Schedule of Specific Commitments on Services, contained in document WT/ACC/AFG/36 - WT/MIN(15)/6/Add.2.
7. The Accession Package of Afghanistan was adopted at the 5<sup>th</sup> and Final Working Party Meeting on 11 November 2015 on an *ad referendum* basis. By this action, the Working Party completed its

mandate and forwarded the Report to which I have just referred to the Ministerial Conference for decision.

8. The Appendix to the Report reproduces the draft Decision for the Ministerial Conference and the draft Protocol on the Accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. The Accession Protocol incorporates, by reference, the specific commitments undertaken by Afghanistan in the Report of the Working Party.
9. As Chairman of the Working Party, following my assessment of the Accession Package of Afghanistan with the Secretariat Team, compared to 35 previous Accession Packages, I am in a position to report to the Ministerial Conference that the Accession Package of Afghanistan is of a high quality, and makes a significant contribution to improving market access opportunities, and strengthening the WTO. Above all it provides Afghanistan with a platform for a long-term

agenda for domestic reforms for welfare-enhancing growth.

10. As Members know, WTO accessions entail far-reaching domestic reforms. They cannot be concluded without high level political commitment and leadership. This is why, on behalf of the WTO, I wish to place on record my appreciation to President Ashraf Ghani for receiving me and the Director of Accessions in the month of November for a dialogue that linked the domestic economic priorities of the Government to the Draft Accession Package of Afghanistan. That Mission to Kabul made all the difference. I thank President Ghani for his leadership.
  
11. I would like to add a personal note. Afghanistan is a landlocked, least developed country, facing many challenges on poverty reduction. At the same time, it is a country with great potential, not the least due to the quality and education of its population. During my visit in Kabul, I was impressed by the strong commitments taken up by the Government of Afghanistan to integrate into the world economy and do the necessary structural

reforms. Economic growth and job creation are necessary for poverty reduction and stability. WTO membership will contribute to this and more importantly, give hope to the population and in particular, the youth of Afghanistan, in a better future. They deserve this.

12. I also pay tribute to Minister Humayoon Rasaw; and, National Economic Advisor Omar Zakhilwal, who worked hard to steer through the Draft Accession Package in its final stage. No less, as Chairman, I pay tribute as well to my friend and Deputy Minister Mozammil Shinwari, Chief Negotiator. He was key in this accession. The work of this entire team, under the most challenging of circumstances, was exemplary.
13. Let me also acknowledge the contributions of my predecessors who chaired the Working Party - Ambassador I. M. De Jong, and Ambassador B. J. van Eenennaam - and steered the proceedings in the earlier stages.
14. WTO Members deserve the highest tribute. They worked very hard with the Delegation of

Afghanistan and showed goodwill and compromise at difficult moments.

15. As the Chairperson of the Working Party, I would like to place on record my deep appreciation to Director-General Roberto Azevêdo and the WTO Secretariat. I would also like to pay particular tribute to the Director of the Accessions Division, Chiedu Osakwe, the Secretary and Co-Secretary of the Working Party. They worked tirelessly and, consistently, gave sound advice. Many have contributed to this result.
16. In closing, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Working Party, I have the privilege to commend the Protocol on the Accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for approval; and commend the Draft Decision and the Report of the Working Party for adoption by the Ministerial Conference.
17. By adopting, we take a historical step for Afghanistan, but also for the WTO underlining the importance of this growing organization.
18. Thank you.

