



**FIFTH CHINA ROUND TABLE ON WTO ACCESSIONS  
SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA  
22 MARCH 2017**

**CLOSING REMARKS**

*By David P. Shark, Deputy Director-General, WTO*

1. I think I can probably speak for everybody when I say that the last 3 days have been a valuable and productive use of time and resources. Our trade assistance programme has grown quite a bit over the years but the kind of assistance provided in a setting like this is quite unique. This Round Table has been a remarkably valuable setting and I was pleased to have been part of that over the past couple of days.
2. It is one thing for us to talk to you about particular agreements and the process of negotiation but nothing can replicate the value you get from talking with one another. From those of you who have just joined the accession queue, talking to those who have been in for a while and keep wondering "*what is the way out?*" to those of you who have made it to the end of the tunnel to share your experience.
3. All situations differ from country to country and there are no cookie-cutter approaches or one size fits all ideas. But still, lessons can be drawn from everybody's experience - whether it was directly comparable to one's situation or not. One thing that became pretty clear during this meeting is that all countries face vastly differing situations.
4. We have heard a number of important points in this meeting. One of the principle points was the importance of buy-in. Countries move quickly and effectively in accession when they see that the requirements of accession are changes, practices and directions they want to take their country in. An accession tends to move quickly when a Member or an acceding country has internalized what is required and says: "*this would be useful to my country and what we want to achieve*". That point was made very clear by Minister Addy who said "*we did not make these changes for the WTO - we made these changes because these were things that we needed to do in order to manage our post-conflict economy*".
5. That also emphasizes the importance of leadership from the top, which I saw personally when I was chairing the Cape Verde Working Party. Cape Verde's accession had been languishing for quite a while, but when the Minister and the Vice-Minister committed to conclude the accession, it started moving relatively quickly.



6. As Minister Purcell pointed out, each accession has its own pace. The circumstances differ significantly. You have countries that are in the middle of a conflict; countries that may have to recover from natural catastrophes; and countries that legitimately have other priorities in any given time or are going through important transitions politically.

7. Members need to show flexibilities particularly for LDCs but at the same time there are no shortcuts. There are things that you have to do to become a Member. I heard after Liberia's accession, a lot of people wanted Minister Addy to tell them: *what was the fast track to the finish line? What had made it easier for him?* The truth is: nothing made it easier for him. If he made it to the finish line faster than people expected, it is because he ran faster. His team worked very hard.

8. I also have to give credit to Members. They responded in kind and I think most of you can count on that. If you are willing to do what is necessary to become a Member, you will find that Members are willing to meet you half way. You will also find a Secretariat that will work hard to help you get to the finish line.

9. As Minister Al-Maitami and Minister Purcell pointed out, there are external factors. Despite your best wishes, you can get setbacks. But it is important to keep putting in the effort. Indeed, accession is unavoidably complex and difficult. It requires reform and change is inherently difficult. But there are WTO partners that are ready to help and there is a lot of good will towards LDCs from Members.

10. I am also proud of our team's work on post-accession because we cannot leave you standing at the doorway when it comes time to enter the building. It is a continuous effort and I give a lot of credit to the staff in the Accessions Division for conceptualizing and drawing on the needs that were expressed by LDC Members on post-accession.

11. I would like to express thanks to the Royal Government of Cambodia for hosting this conference as well as taking on the important leadership role of chairing the LDC group for the year. I would like to express deep appreciation to China for the China LDC Programme which made this meeting possible.

12. I would also like to thank the Accessions Division staff for their hard work. But mostly, I would like to congratulate all the participants in this conference for their active engagement which contributed to the success of this conference.

13. Thank you all and I wish you safe journeys home.

---