

CHINA WTO ACCESSION INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME ALUMNI STORY

Amara, please tell us...



Where are you from, and what have you studied before joining the China Programme?

I am from Nigeria. I had a law degree and had just finished coursework for the MILE programme at the World Trade Institute, Berne, Switzerland when I joined the China Programme.

Why did you apply?

It was a question of from theory to practice. I was desirous of observing and learning about the inner workings of the WTO as a negotiating forum with the aim of building sufficient capacity to work in this field. The China programme with the WTO Accessions Division gave me good opportunity to engage practically various aspects of the WTO covered agreements and this experience serves me well in my current position.

What kind of work were you assigned to during your internship?

Not fetching coffee...lol!

It was a deep dive. I was assigned to

- Research for three chapters of the Accessions book project. (The chapters on: LDCs; Investment; and Mega Regionals Comparability). I also contributed to authoring the energy chapter of the Accessions book.
- The preparation of the report for the 2nd China Roundtable that took place in 2013.
- The data transfer for the Accessions Intelligence Portal (AIP) which facilitated my understanding of the different documents handled and prepared by the division.

- assist various professionals in the capacity of co-secretary on the Working Parties of the Bahamas, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the Republic of the Seychelles. Some of these Accessions were inactive at the time. I had the opportunity to support the work of the division on the Accession of Kazakhstan and Liberia.
- The DG's 2014 annual report on WTO Accession.
- The Director and my supervisor with preparing slides for the Director's presentations on WTO accessions for several groups.
- In addition to the day to day work, I also completed three eLearning courses. (WTO Accessions; Introduction to the WTO; and Regional Trade Agreements and the WTO)
- I also attended and observed the proceedings of several WTO meetings.

Looking back, what do you think of your work experience at the WTO, and as participant of the China Programme?

I feel that the opportunity prepared me well for the work that I do today. The hands-on approach of my Director and professionals that supervised my tasks ensured that I was well involved in the substantive work of the Division in those 10 months. During my internship, the supervision was constructive. I got good direction as well as the flexibility to learn by trying on the various assigned tasks. Assisting as Working Party co-secretary amongst other tasks exposed me to various aspects of the covered agreements as well as negotiations between acceding governments and Members. The China programme was very useful in deepening my understanding of the operations of the multilateral trading system and international trade. I extend my appreciation to the government of China for creating and sustaining such an educational stepping-stone that has helped young professionals from developing countries like myself to build much needed capacity in this field.

What have you done since?

I immediately went back to legal practice. Soon after, I relocated to the capital where I worked as an independent trade consultant advising the ECOWAS on advancing strategic trade litigation and the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment on various WTO issues. In 2017, the Nigerian Office for Trade Negotiations (NOTN) was established, and I joined as Head of the Asia Pacific Department, leading all Nigeria's trade negotiations with partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, since 2017, I have led E-Commerce engagements for the NOTN.

Following an internal restructuring of the NOTN in May 2021, I became the Head of Trade in Services Department. I resigned from the NOTN with effect from 12 November 2021 and returned to independent consulting on trade.

Thank you, Amara!