

CHINA ROUND TABLE

TENTH CHINA ROUND TABLE ON WTO ACCESSIONS

10 YEARS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING UNDER THE CHINA PROGRAMME
Reflections on LDC Accessions

Programme

VIRTUAL, 18 – 20 January 2022





The 10th China Round Table is funded by the Government of China and organized by the WTO Secretariat, as part of the agreed activities under the China-WTO MOU¹.

For questions and inquiries on the Round Table, please contact:

- Ms. Mariam Soumaré (tel: +41 22 739 50 25; e-mail: mariam.soumare@wto.org)
- Ms. Zsafia Tvarusko (tel: +41 739 61 19; email: zsafia.tvarusko@wto.org)

Cover photo: Jet d'Eau Geneva © WTO Secretariat (Souda Tandara-Stenier)

¹ In July 2011, the Government of the People's Republic of China signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WTO Secretariat on the China LDCs' and Accessions Programme ("The China Programme"). The Programme has been extended on a yearly basis, with the latest signed on 1 December 2020. The China Programme has five pillars, including the WTO Accessions Internship Programme and the annual Accession Round Table, designed to build capacity and technical skills in trade policy, including on accession negotiations, for acceding governments and Article XII Members, especially from least-developed countries.

PREVIOUS ROUND TABLES



First China Round Table: “Best-Practices in the WTO Accession Process”

Beijing, China, 29 May - 1 June 2012



Second China Round Table: “The Future of the Multilateral Trading System: Perspectives of LDCs and Article XII Members”

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 15-18 October 2013



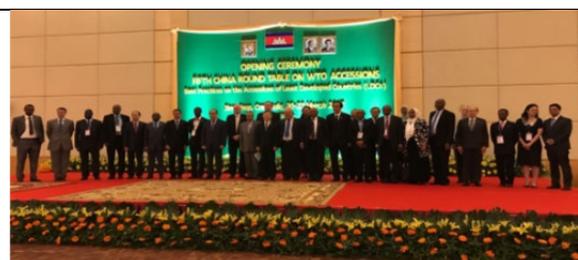
Third China Round Table: “Post-Accession: Maximizing the Benefits of WTO Membership and Global Economic Integration”

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 2-5 June 2015



Fourth China Round Table: “African Perspectives on the Future of Trading System: Domestic Reforms for Competitiveness and Deeper Trade Integration in the Global Economy”

Nairobi, Kenya, 13-14 December 2015



Fifth China Round Table: “Best Practices on the Accessions of Least Developed Countries LDCs”

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 20-23 March 2017



Sixth China Round Table: “Strengthening the Rules-based Multilateral Trading System and Building a Network to Promote Accessions”

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 10 December 2017

PREVIOUS ROUND TABLES (Cont'd)



Seventh China Round Table: "Eurasian Perspectives on the Future of the Multilateral Trading System: Accessions and the Evolution of WTO rules"
Astana, Kazakhstan, 26-27 September 2018



Eighth China Round Table: "Accessions and WTO Reform: On the Road to MC12"
Moscow, Russian Federation, 4-6 December 2019

Ninth China Round Table: "25 Years of WTO Accession in Review" Virtual Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, 11 December 2020



BACKGROUND

2021 marked the 10th anniversary of China's Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and Accessions Programme (the 'China Programme'). On 14 July 2011, the Government of China and the World Trade Organization signed a memorandum of understanding establishing the China Programme aiming to strengthen LDC's participation in the WTO and assisting acceding governments to join the WTO through five main pillars: (i) China WTO Accessions Internship Programme; (ii) Annual China Round Tables on WTO Accessions; (iii) increasing participation of LDCs in WTO meetings; (iv) South-South Dialogue on LDCs in WTO meetings; and (v) LDCs' Trade Policy Review follow-up workshops.

Since its establishment, the China Programme demonstrated its unique value through targeted assistance to acceding LDCs. This group of LDCs is often faced with unique sets of challenges requiring dedicated support and capacity-building to undertake the necessary reforms required to join the WTO. In total, nine WTO Members have acceded as LDCs pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO². Currently, eight LDCs are in the process of WTO accession.³ Technical assistance and capacity-building under the China Programme especially through pillar I (WTO Accessions Internship Programme) and pillar II (Annual China Round Tables on WTO Accessions) have facilitated and advanced many of these accession negotiations.

Beyond WTO Accessions, the China Programme provided targeted support to LDCs by (i) funding the participation of LDCs coordinators in meetings related to Aid for Trade, as well as the participation of LDC Delegations in selected WTO meetings through pillar III; (ii) funding High-Level Annual Retreats with LDCs to review the evolving pattern of South-South cooperation on trade to strengthen coordination among LDCs in the context of concluding multilateral negotiations through pillar IV; and (iii) funding the participation of experts from the WTO Secretariat in workshops hosted by LDCs that are subject to a Trade Policy Review through pillar V.

Today, LDCs' challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout. A recent comprehensive study undertaken by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy⁴ indicated that while the COVID-19 pandemic spread less severely and rapidly in LDCs than the rest of the world, the economic fallout may be more devastating due to various factors including disruptions in global value chains; a global fall in foreign direct investment and remittances; and a decline in international tourism, among others. Added to this are the existing conflict-fragility risks of many acceding LDCs. Half of the current acceding governments are currently considered fragile and conflict affected countries (Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan and Timor-Leste). Going forward, deeper efforts should be geared towards prioritizing enhanced support for the integration of LDCs in the multilateral trading system through WTO accession.

THE 10TH CHINA ROUND TABLE

For 10 years, the China Programme has set a strong foundation for targeted support on LDC accessions. China Round Tables have provided a valuable platform for acceding governments, particularly acceding LDCs to build capacity through experience-sharing and sustaining discussions on the contributions of WTO accessions to the multilateral trading system. To date, nine Round Tables have been hosted in three continents: CRT-01 in Beijing, China (May 2012); CRT-02 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR (October 2013); CRT-03 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan (June 2015); CRT-04 in Nairobi, Kenya (December 2015); CRT-05 in Siem Reap, Cambodia (March 2017); CRT-06 in Buenos Aires, Argentina (December 2017); CRT-07 in Astana, Kazakhstan (September 2018); CRT-08 in Moscow, Russian Federation (December 2019); and CRT-09 in Geneva, Switzerland (December 2020).

The 10th China Round Table will provide a timely occasion to celebrate the 10 years anniversary of the China Programme, reflect on its impact on LDC accessions and define the future directions of the Programme. It will also provide an opportunity to inform the upcoming discussions of the LDCV Conference. It will take place from 18 to 20 January 2022 via Zoom.

² Article XII Members that acceded to the WTO as LDCs were: Afghanistan (2016), Cabo Verde (2008), Cambodia (2004), Lao PDR (2013), Liberia (2016), Nepal (2004), Samoa (2012), Vanuatu (2012), and Yemen (2014). Cabo Verde and Samoa graduated from LDC status in 2008 and 2014, respectively.

³ Bhutan, Comoros, Ethiopia, Sao Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Timor-Leste.

⁴ https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP_Comprehensive_Study_2021.pdf

DETAILED PROGRAMME

TUESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2022

SESSION 1 (HIGH-LEVEL SESSION) – FUTURE OF LDC ACCESSIONS 12:00 - 13:30 CET

The high-level opening session will take stock of the key achievements of the China Programme since its establishment in July 2011 and celebrate its 10 years anniversary. This will be followed by a Round Table discussion where LDC Ministers/Chief Negotiators will reflect on the future of LDC accessions and explore innovative and forward-looking ways to address LDC accession challenges.

High-Level Opening Session

12:00 – 12:30

Moderator:

- Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General, WTO

Speakers:

- Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, WTO
- H.E. Mr. Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce, China
- H.E. Mr. Ali Djadda Kampard, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Chad, LDC Coordinator
- Honourable Mawine G. Diggs, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Liberia, and Co-coordinator of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group

Round Table with LDC Ministers & Chief Negotiators: Reflection on the Future of LDC Accessions

12:30 – 13:30

Moderator:

- Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO

Speakers:

What are the salient challenges LDCs face in their accession process and how can they be best addressed?

- H.E. Mr. Mzé Abdou Mohamed Chanfiou, Minister of Economy and Industry, Comoros
- H.E. Mr. Joaquim Amaral, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Timor-Leste

How can LDCs harness the WTO accession process and membership to foster economic resilience?

- H.E. Mr. Salem Mohamed Salman, Vice Minister of Industry and Trade, Yemen
- Mr. Saysana Sayakone, Director-General of Foreign Trade Policy, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR
- H.E. Mr. Rithi Pich, Secretary of State, Ministry Of Commerce, Cambodia

Open Discussion

WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022

SESSION 2– OUTLOOK ON LDC ACCESSIONS
12:00 - 13:30 CET

In this session, experts will examine the impacts of WTO accession on the nine LDCs that have joined the Organization pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakech Agreement. Mr. Patrick Low, former WTO Chief Economist and Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry of Afghanistan will present the results of a study reviewing the accession outcome of the nine LDCs after they joined the WTO. This will be followed by an open discussion among participants.

Presentation of the Study: Accession of Least Developed Countries to the WTO - Challenges and Opportunities

12:00 – 13:30

Moderator:

- Mr. Axel M. Addy, former Minister of Trade and Industry and Chief Negotiator, Liberia

Speakers:

- Mr. Patrick Low, former WTO Chief Economist
- Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chief Negotiator, Afghanistan

Commentator:

- Ms. Cecilia Leahy Klein, former Senior USTR Director for WTO Accessions

Open discussion: (Note: Active participation of Article XII and acceding LDCs is encouraged)

THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022

SESSION 3- ACHIEVEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE CHINA PROGRAMME
12:00 - 13:30 CET

For 10 years, the China Programme provided targeted support to LDCs across five main pillars: (i) China WTO Accessions Internship Programme; (ii) Annual China Round Tables on WTO Accessions; (iii) increasing participation of LDCs in WTO meetings; (iv) South-South Dialogue on LDCs in WTO meetings; and (v) LDCs' Trade Policy Review follow-up workshops. In this session, the panellists will discuss the ways in which the Programme can better serve its targeted beneficiaries in light of the current global economic realities.

Five Pillars of the China Programme – Achievements and Opportunities

12:00 – 13:30

Moderator:

- Mr. Usman Ali Khilji, Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation, WTO

Speakers:

Discussion on the Future of the China Programme

- Ms. Maria Martins da Silva, Economic Adviser to the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Timor-Leste
- Ambassador Ahmad Makaila, Permanent Representative of Chad to the WTO, LDC Coordinator
- Mr. Tom Tombekai, Deputy Director of Price Analysis, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Liberia
- Ambassador Li Chenggang, Permanent Representative of China to the WTO

Open Discussion

CHINA ROUND TABLE