

WTO Regional Dialogue on Accession for Greater Horn of Africa Closing Remarks

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WTO ASSISTANT SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF ACCESSIONS, MS MAIKA
OSHIKAWA, HEADS OF DELEGATIONS, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, THE
AMBASSADORS, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am delighted to give my closing remarks in this important forum which has brought together delegates from regional countries to have a dialogue on the WTO accessions for the greater horn of Africa.

From the dialogue that started on Monday the 28th of August 2017, it has emerged that it takes an average of 10 years for a country to accede to the WTO. However, it has taken the Horn of African countries intending to accede to the WTO an average of 5.4 years.

It is important to note that the concessions a country should give at the regional level should be more (maximum) than the concessions that it should make with countries that are thousands of miles away.

WTO helps countries intending to accede in achieving economic reforms especially in learning to be disciplined and setting norms of behaviour. The reforms need to be sequenced so that the acceding countries can obtain maximum benefits from WTO and trade in general.

The last of the UN sustainable development goals deals with trade. There is need for coherence in trade policy with other goals such that the whole agenda of accession should be inclusive.

The Liberalization agenda should be geared towards job creation, poverty reduction, increase supply capacity and enhance regional integration.

It is important to address the issue of governance since WTO focuses on both domestic and political reforms.

The low level of the intra-African trade is due to lack of interconnectivity, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade and lack of economies of scale.

The acceding countries are lucky because they can learn from those who have been founder members of WTO and those that have gone through the whole experience of preparing for accession to WTO.

Experience from the older members of the WTO such as China shows that its GDP increased after accession, its trade in goods and services increased, its foreign direct investment increased and its overall competitiveness also increased.

However, there is need for political determination and patience post liberalization and a rational opening of the economy important hence the need to look from within.

The requests from WTO may be too high targeting especially for most LDCs hence the need for a combination of technical assistance and local human capacity.

Acceding countries should build a professional negotiation team; mobilize support from all domestic stakeholders, capacity building in WTO rules and a combination of both short terms and long term impact assessment.

Kenya did not have the experience of preparing for accession as it is a founder member of the WTO. So the acceding countries have the advantage of learning from the mistakes the others have made. You will face many challenges ranging from resistance from private sector and other stakeholders who may not be willing to face competition from cheaper goods that come from developed countries that may be enjoying economies of scale, structural rigidities in institutions, lack of political good will, resistance to reforms and so on.

However, preparation is of utmost importance and the University of Nairobi will be at hand to offer capacity building if and when called upon to do so.

I take this chance to wish you all the best in your preparation and accession and hope that this will increase cross border trade between Kenya and yourselves.

I also wish you all the best as you go through the next two days as you go through the training on WTO accession.

However, take this afternoon's chance to see Kenya's flora and fauna as you visit our animal orphanage and enjoy your visit to our very glorious shopping Malls of Hub and/or Two Rivers Mall.

Thank you.