

Forum on WTO Accessions - Thursday 13 July 2017

Good morning,

I would like to start this intervention by thanking the WTO Secretariat, especially, the WTO Accessions Division for the organization of this useful event that brings together LDCs acceding to the WTO, WTO Members and development partners. This event fosters dialogue and contributes to the smooth accession of LDCs to the WTO.

Allow me to briefly explain what the ACWL does. The ACWL is an international organization that provides **legal assistance** to its developing country Members and LDCs in three main areas: **dispute settlement, legal advice in the form of legal opinions, and training activities**. The ACWL has represented developing countries in nearly 20% of all WTO cases since its establishment in 2001 and has issued over 2400 legal opinions in total.

Providing legal assistance to LDCs is of great importance to the ACWL's work. We provide legal assistance to LDCs acceding to the WTO at two main stages: **before accession and after accession**.

We have provided LDCs legal assistance before accession in three different ways: (i) providing legal advice, (ii) training government lawyers through the Secondment Programme, and (iii) providing general training to acceding LDC delegates in Geneva. I will explain these three issues in turn.

First, we provide **legal advice** to acceding LDCs at the early stages of accession, during the accession process, and on specific issues of interest to the acceding LDC. Liberia and Lao PDR have publicly acknowledged the assistance we have provided to them during the accession process.

Second, we offer the **Secondment Programme**. Under this programme, government lawyers from developing country Members and LDCs join the staff of the ACWL as paid trainees for a nine-month term. The programme has been extremely successful and has given the participants an opportunity to work with, and learn from, the ACWL's lawyers about WTO legal issues and in dispute settlement proceedings, and to share this knowledge back in their capitals. This programme was launched in 2005. Since then, we have had two government lawyers from Bhutan, an acceding LDC to the WTO.

Third, we provide an **annual training course** from October to June each year to delegates of developing country Members and LDCs that are based in Geneva. The course is run on a three-year cycle. In the first year, the course covers the basic principles of WTO law; in the second year, the WTO agreements relating to trade remedies, trade in services, trade-related intellectual property rights, and other disciplines; and in the third year, the WTO dispute settlement procedures. In recent years, the course has included a popular moot court exercise in which course participants take part in a simulated dispute settlement proceeding involving the legal issues addressed during the course. To date, the ACWL has awarded 426 Certificates of Training to delegates from nearly all ACWL developing country Members and from two thirds of the LDCs with missions in Geneva, including those of acceding LDCs to the WTO, such as Ethiopia.

After accession, the ACWL is committed to continue providing legal assistance to acceded LDC Members. For example, we have recently organised tailor-made training programmes and workshops for Lao PDR and Afghanistan that took place outside Geneva. We also provide tailor-made training programmes via video-conference to avoid travel and accommodation expenses.

Allow me to conclude by making two important points. The first point is that **the services of the ACWL are free of charge for acceding LDCs**. There are only two conditions to make use of the ACWL legal services free of charge: (i) the request must be made by an acceding LDC, and (ii) the request

must concern a WTO legal issue. You can contact us by email, fax, phone, etc. The second point is that **we are keen to cooperate with other development agencies to facilitate the accession of LDCs to the WTO**. We have done this in the past, and we would like to do it in the future. For example, we worked very closely with the IDEAS Centre during the accession of Lao PDR.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Useful links:

ACWL's website

<http://www.acwl.ch/>

2016 ACWL's Report on Operations

http://www.acwl.ch/download/dd/reports_ops/Final_Report_on_Operations_2016_website.pdf

ACWL's Secondment Programme

<http://www.acwl.ch/secondment-programme/>

ACWL's Annual Training Programme

<http://www.acwl.ch/annual-training-course/>

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