



LAUNCH OF THE g7+ WTO ACCESSIONS GROUP
WELCOMING DEVELOPMENT FOR POST-CONFLICT AND
FRAGILE ECONOMIES
THROUGH WTO ACCESSIONS

PUBLIC DIALOGUE SESSION

Sunday, 10 December 2017

Statement by Ambassador Alan Wm. Wolff,

Deputy Director-General, WTO

*Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Panellists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. Good morning and welcome to the Public Dialogue Session of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group.
2. This new Group is a sub-group of the larger g7+ group, which was formed in 2010 as an association of 20 fragile and conflict-affected states.

3. This morning, the g7+ WTO Accessions Group was launched by the Trade Ministers of its eight Least developed country (LDC) members which have been associated with WTO accessions.

4. They include:

- three recently acceded to the WTO: Afghanistan, Liberia and Yemen;
- four of which are currently acceding to the WTO: Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Timor-Leste, although unfortunately, Sao Tome and Principe could not attend as it is not represented at MC11; and finally,
- South Sudan whose application to start WTO accession is being considered by this Ministerial Conference.

5. The theme of today's session is "Welcoming development for post-conflict and fragile economies through WTO accessions".

6. I hope that the discussions this morning can explore how trade, WTO membership, the accession process and more broadly, the integration in the multilateral trading system, can play a role and contribute to the enormous challenges faced by those least developed countries which have been severely affected by years of conflicts – internal and external, and the resulting instability which affects directly their peoples and their futures.

7. As you know, youth under 30 of age in these countries represent over 70 per cent of their population. History can tell you how explosive, damaging long-term instability can have on individuals, their families, their nations and on the future of world events all together.

8. Conflict or post-conflict is not the usual topic which WTO members talk about in Geneva at the World Trade Organization, and not even at Ministerial Conferences. However, the pursuit by these countries of WTO membership, despite the challenges, reminds us

of the critical contribution that the multilateral trading system can make to the peace and stability of nations.

9. Contributing to global peace and stability has in fact been a primary purpose of the multilateral trading system from the outset, with the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1947. It was designed to provide this global public good. The countries that the g7+ addresses believe in using the accession process and WTO membership to build and rebuild their economies. Their commitment reconfirms the attraction and strength of the system whose principles and values continue to serve as a suitable foundation for national economies, regardless of the level of development, policy orientation or size.

10. Today, we have 21 (soon 22) governments, which are negotiating WTO membership for the benefit of their peoples. Beyond the g7+ group members, a number are post-conflict and fragile states, or indeed still in conflict, such as Libya, Syria, Iraq¹, all struggling to restore stability and focus on much needed economic recovery.

11. We also have good examples of post-conflict states among Article XII members i.e. those acceding to the WTO after its creation in 1995 where WTO membership has played an important role as a stabilizer in the post-conflict process of building peace. Notable in this regard are Cambodia, Nepal, Georgia, and Tajikistan².

12. We can anticipate that the g7+ WTO Accessions Group can offer a platform to initiate a new dialogue on "trade delivering the benefits of peace".

¹ See Annex 1.

² See Annex 2.

Questions for the panel discussion

- *Afghanistan and Liberia: How your WTO accession process has contributed to developing your post-conflict economy? After two years from the conclusion of the accession negotiations, what are main lessons so far about your accession?"*
- *Yemen: Yemen acceded to the WTO in 2014. But unfortunately, since then, the country has fallen into conflict, which is still on-going. How do you see WTO membership in the current challenges which Yemen is facing now?"*
- *Comoros: What are main challenges in the small islands which have suffered instability due to unscheduled changes in government over the decades. How is the situation now, especially in the context of your current accession process?"*
- *Somalia and Timor-Leste: As the latest applicants to the WTO, you have been in the accession process for one year now. Please tell us how you see WTO accession process can contribute to the re-building of your economies. What are the main challenges?"*
- *South Sudan: You have just put forward an application to start WTO accession, which is being considered by WTO Ministers at this Ministerial Conference. As the youngest nation in the world with the independence gained in 2011, how do you see the WTO, in particular, as part of your state-building?"*
- *Sierra Leone: Sierra Leone is currently the Chair of the larger g7+, but you are the original WTO member since 1995, and indeed in the GATT since 1961. How do you see this initiative as an original member of the WTO?"*

ANNEX 1

Governments in the process of WTO accession: total time since application and types of economies³

	Acceding Government	Date of Application	Total Time of since Application	Type of economy				
				Resource-based	Transition	Small Island State	Land-locked economy	Post-conflict state
1	Algeria	06/1987	29 years	X				
2	Belarus	09/1993	23 years		X		X	
3	Sudan*	10/1994	22 years	X				X
4	Uzbekistan	12/1994	22 years	X	X		X	
5	Iran	07/1996	20 years	X	X			
6	Azerbaijan	06/1997	19 years	X	X		X	X
7	Andorra	07/1997	19 years				X	
8	Lebanese Republic	01/1999	17 years					X
9	Bosnia and Herzegovina	05/1999	17 years		X			X
10	Bhutan*	09/1999	17 years				X	
11	Bahamas	05/2001	15 years			X		
12	Syrian Arab Republic	10/2001	15 years	X				X
13	Ethiopia*	01/2003	13 years		X		X	X
14	Libya	06/2004	12 years	X				X
15	Iraq	09/2004	12 years	X				X
16	Serbia	12/2004	12 years		X		X	
17	Sao Tome et Principe*	01/2005	11 years			X		
18	Equatorial Guinea*	02/2007	9 years	X				
19	Comoros*	02/2007	9 years			X		
20	Somalia	11/2016	13 months	X				X
21	Timor-Leste	11/2016	13 months			X		X
xx	South Sudan	12/2017	-	X			X	X
			Average: 16 years 4 months	11	7	4	8	11

Source: WTO Secretariat.

Note: * LDCs.

Resource-rich countries, defined by IMF (2012), with the characteristics of either having natural resource revenue or exports at least 20% of total fiscal revenue and exports, respectively, over 2006-2010. Transition Economies, according to the IMF/World Bank definition. SIDS and LLDC, according to the UN. Post-Conflict states, according to UNDP.

³2016 DG's Annual Report on WTO Accessions (WT/ACC/28), updated on 10/12/2017.

ANNEX 2

WTO ACCESSION – TYPE OF ECONOMY AND EXPORT DIVERSIFICATION⁴

No	Article XII Member	Type of economy					Number of HS chapters accounting for more than 60% of exports	
		Resource based	Transition	Small Island Developing State (SIDS)	Land-locked Country	Post-conflict	Year of Accession	2015 (+ 2014)
1	Ecuador	X					3	3
2	Bulgaria		X				13	13
3	Mongolia	X	X		X		2	2
4	Panama						3	5
5	Kyrgyz Rep.		X		X		6	3
6	Latvia		X				5	12
7	Estonia		X				11	11
8	Jordan						10	7
9	Georgia		X			X	5	6
10	Albania	X	X				2	4
11	Oman	X					1	1
12	Croatia		X				12	14
13	Lithuania		X				8	15
14	Moldova		X		X		4	6
15	China		X				8	8
16	Chinese Taipei						6	7
17	Armenia		X		X		4	5
18	FYROM		X		X		4	5
19	Nepal*				X	X	3	4
20	Cambodia*		X			X	1	1
21	Saudi Arabia	X					1	1
22	Viet Nam	X	X				6	7 ⁺
23	Tonga			X			2	2 ⁺
24	Ukraine		X				6	5
25	Cabo Verde*			X			2	2
26	Montenegro		X				4	6
27	Samoa*			X			2	3
28	Russian Fed.	X	X				2	3
29	Vanuatu*			X			4	n.a.
30	Lao PDR*	X	X		X		n.a.	n.a.
31	Tajikistan		X		X	X	n.a.	n.a.
32	Yemen*	X				X	2	n.a.
33	Seychelles			X			2	2
35	Kazakhstan	X	X		X		1	1
36	Liberia*	X				X	n.a.	n.a.
34	Afghanistan*				X	X	n.a.	n.a.
	TOTAL	11	21	5	10	6	136⁺⁺	161⁺⁺

Source: WTO Secretariat based on calculations from UN COMTRADE

Note: * LDC. ⁺ 2014. ⁺⁺ Indicates a total number from Ecuador to the Russian Federation.

Resource-rich countries, defined by IMF (2012), with the characteristics of either having natural resource revenue or exports at least 20% of total fiscal revenue and exports, respectively, over 2006-2010. Transition Economies, according to the IMF/World Bank definition. SIDS and LLDC, according to the UN. Post-Conflict states, according to UNDP.

⁴ 2016 DG's Annual Report on WTO Accessions (WT/ACC/28), updated on 10/12/2017.