

2nd High-Level Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Arab Region

Adaptive Approaches to WTO Accession amid COVID-19

7-9 February 2022, Virtual Event (Zoom)

PROGRAMME



6TH WORKING PARTY ON THE
ACCESSION OF THE UNION OF THE
COMOROS - 21 SEPT. 2021



5TH WORKING PARTY ON
THE ACCESSION OF SUDAN
- 26 JULY 2021



1st High-Level Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for the Arab Region – 8-10 November 2020

For questions and inquiries on the Programme of the High-Level Regional Dialogue, please contact:

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Introduction

The Arab region comprises eight acceding governments (Algeria, Comoros, Iraq, Lebanese Republic, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Syrian Arab Republic), accounting for more than one third of ongoing WTO accessions. Four Arab countries (the Kingdom of Jordan, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen) have acceded to the WTO since its establishment in 1995. The majority of Arab countries that are still outside the WTO face a multitude of challenges that go beyond trade. These challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a follow up to the successful first High-Level Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions, held on 8-10 November 2020 under the theme "Arab Perspectives on WTO Accessions and the Multilateral Trading System", the second High-Level Regional Dialogue will also be organized virtually in collaboration with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) on 7-9 February 2022. The event will build on the previous dialogue, which included sessions related to the accession process – the difficulties faced, the experiences learned, and potential solutions to assist acceding governments. Moreover, the Regional Dialogue will focus on specific topics of interest to Arab acceding governments, such as the role of the private sector, Trade Facilitation, Trade in Services and Trade for Peace.

The Second High-Level Regional Dialogue entitled "Adaptive Approaches to WTO Accession amid COVID-19" is organized to keep the momentum going among Arab acceding governments to help them advance closer to WTO Membership. Specific objectives of the event include, inter alia:

1. increasing participants' knowledge of the WTO accession process, accession-related rules, and the state-of-play of Arab accessions.
2. deepening discussions by focusing on specific topics of interest to acceding governments, such as the synergies between regional integration and WTO accessions. Proposed topics are Trade Facilitation and Trade in Services.
3. facilitating acceding governments to share experiences and lessons learned from the accession process by engaging with the private sector in accessions negotiations.
4. discussing the role of the Trade for Peace Programme in enhancing Arab fragile and conflict-affected (FCA) countries in accession to use trade as a vehicle for peace and stability for their countries and for the region.

English and Arabic interpretation will be provided for the entire duration of the High-Level Dialogue.

MONDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2022

SESSION 1 - HIGH-LEVEL SESSION AND ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
11:00 - 13:30 CET / 14:00-16:30 (GST)

The high-level opening session will address "Adaptive Approaches to WTO Accession amid COVID-19 for the Arab Region" to keep the momentum going among Arab acceding governments and help them advance closer to WTO Membership. This will be followed by a roundtable discussion among Chief Negotiators from Arab Acceding Governments focusing on the biggest challenges but also opportunities for WTO accession.

High-Level Opening Session

11:00-11:45 (CET)

Moderator: Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO

Keynote Speech:

- H.E. Mr. Azali Assoumani, President, The Union of the Comoros (Video recording)

14:00-14:45 (GST)

Welcome remarks:

- Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, WTO
- H.E. Dr Abdulrahman A. Al Hamidy, Director General Chairman of the Board, Arab Monetary Fund (AMF)
- Mr. Amer Bukvic, Director-General, Global Practice and Partnerships, Islamic Development Bank
- H.E. Mr. Saqer Abdullah ALMOQBEL, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the WTO, Coordinator of Arab Group

Chief Negotiators' Roundtable: Accession Challenges and Opportunities in the Arab Region

11:45-13:30 (CET)

Moderator: Ambassador Zhang Xiangchen, Deputy Director-General, WTO

Speakers:

14:45-16:30 (GST)

State of Play of Accessions in the Arab Region

- Ms. Mena Hassan, Economic Affairs Officer, Accessions Division, WTO

Roundtable Discussion: "What are the specific challenges and opportunities in accession?"

- Algeria - H.E. Mr. Kamel REZIG, Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession (TBC)
- Comoros (Union of) - H.E. Mr. Mzé Abdou Mohamed CHANFIOU, Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession
- Lebanese Republic - H.E. Mr. Amin SALAM, Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession
- Iraq - Mr. Adel Al-Masoodi, Director General of Economics Relations Department, Ministry of Trade
- Libya - Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession (TBC)
- Palestine – Mr. Dawoud Daraldik, Ministry of National Economy
- Somalia - Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession (TBC)
- Sudan - Ms. Fatima Ibrahim, Acting Secretary General of the General Secretariat for WTO Affairs
- Syrian Arab Republic - Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession (TBC)

Commentator: Mr. Zaher Al- Qatarneh, Secretary General, Ministry of Investment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Open Discussion

TUESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2022

SESSION 2 – TRADE IN SERVICES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TODAY

11:00-12:15 CET / 14:00-15:15 GST

In this session, experts will examine the importance of trade in services for the Arab acceding economies. It will demonstrate how trade in services can be improved through adherence to WTO agreements and international best practices and highlight the synergies and complementarities of the WTO Services Agreement (GATS) and services under the GAFTA. This will be followed by an open discussion among participants.

**11:00-12:15
(CET)**

Moderator: Dr. Maha Gabbani, Legal Advisor, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the WTO

**14:00-15:15
(GST)**

Speakers:

- Mr. Hamid Mamdouh, Senior Counsel, King & Spalding LLP and Former Director of Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO
- Dr. Heba Abdel Monem, Chief, Studies & Statistics Division, AMF
- Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Economist, AMF

Open Discussion

Short break

12:15-13:00 CET / 15:15-16:00 GST

SESSION 3 – THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN WTO ACCESSION OF ARAB COUNTRIES

13:00-14:30 CET / 16:00-17:30 GST

In this session, experts will highlight the important role the private sector plays as a key stakeholder in trade policy formulation and WTO accession. The session will encourage dialogue between the public and private sectors and mobilise joint efforts towards successful WTO accession. This will be followed by an open discussion among participants.

**13:00-14:30
(CET)**

Moderator: Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal, Chief, Business and Trade Policy, International Trade Center, ITC

**16:00-17:30
(GST)**

Speakers:

- Ms. Hilda Ali Al-Hinai, Secretary General, Arab-Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TBC)
- Mr. Rabih Sabra, Director-General, Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut & Mount Lebanon
- Mr. Safaa Alshumary, Iraqi Federation and Chamber of Commerce (TBC)

Open Discussion

WEDNESDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2022 SESSION 4 – TRADE FACILITATION AMID AND BEYOND COVID-19 11:00-12:15 CET / 14:00-15:15 GST	
<p>In this session, experts will examine the importance of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and discuss how trade facilitation measures can be utilised to reduce trade costs, increase exports, and support post-COVID-19 economic recovery in the region. This will be followed by an open discussion among participants.</p>	
11:00-12:15 (CET) 14:00-15:15 (GST)	<p>Moderator: Dr. Jaaleddine Ben Regeb, Director, Economic Department, AMF</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Dolores Halloran, Economic Affairs Officer, WTO • Dr. Heba Abdel Monem, Chief, Studies & Statistics Division, AMF • Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Economist, AMF • Dr. Imed Drine, Lead Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Department, IsDB <p>Open Discussion</p>
Short break 12:15-13:00 CET / 15:15-16:00 GST	
SESSION 5 – TRADE FOR PEACE THROUGH WTO ACCESSION 13:00-14:30 CET / 16:00-17:30 GST	
<p>Since many of the countries in the region are Fragile and Conflict-Affected (FCA), this session will highlight the relevance and applicability of harnessing trade as a vehicle for peace through WTO accession in the Arab region. An overview of the WTO "Trade for Peace Programme" will be presented. This will be followed by an open discussion among participants.</p>	
13:00-14:30 (CET) 16:00-17:30 (GST)	<p>Moderator: Mr. Nagib Hamim, Counsellor, WTO Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Yemen to WTO</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Serge Stroobants, Director, Europe & MENA region, Institute for Economics and Peace • Ambassador Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations in New York and Chairman of the Working Party of Iraq • Dr. Linda Kassem, National Coordinator, Lebanon's Accession to the WTO, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Lebanese Republic • Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO <p>Open Discussion</p>
CLOSING SESSION 14:30-15:00 CET / 17:30-18:00 GST	
14:30-15:00 (CET) 17:30-18:00 (GST)	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jaaleddine Ben Regeb, Director, Economic Department, AMF • Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO • Mr Riad Ragueb Ahmed, Acting Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration, IsDB