



The purpose of the Newsletter¹ is to provide Acceding Governments with a summary report of the meetings of the Informal Group on Accessions and to assist them with preparations for meetings and negotiations associated with their accessions. It is one of several practical steps by the WTO Secretariat to ensure transparency on accessions matters. This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the positions of Members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

NEWSLETTER FOR ACCEDING GOVERNMENTS

The first meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions in 2012 took place today, 31 January 2012. At today's meeting, the Secretariat consulted with Members on the evolving calendar of accessions meetings for 2012. Twenty-six delegations attended the meeting, including the Ambassadors of China, Georgia, Panama and Saudi Arabia; and, the ASEAN Coordinator (Thailand).

The Director of the Accessions Division (Mr. Chiedu Osakwe) conveyed to Members the appreciation of the Director-General for the results achieved in 2012 and the hope of the Director-General that "the momentum would be sustained in 2012". He noted, however, that progress and harvest of the four priority areas of focus would also depend on timely and substantive submissions by acceding governments. The DG was working in close coordination with the Working Party Chairpersons on these accessions.

The Chairperson Ambassador Yi (China) of the Working Party on the Accession of Lao PDR, briefed Members on his recent visit to the Acceding Government, where he met with the Prime-Minister and participated in a session of the National Steering Committee on WTO Accession. Members welcomed this transparency exercise. With regard to Lao PDR, Thailand, on behalf of ASEAN, stressed: (i) its continued support to the Working Party Chairperson; and (ii) the need for the early harvest of this 2012 LDC Accession Priority. The EU informed the IGA that it would continue to provide TA to ensure Lao PDR's compliance with WTO rules. With regard to the second LDC Accession Priority, namely, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Arab Group, and Jordan requested Members to: (i) work in close coordination with the new Reconciliation Government in Yemen to conclude this accession at the Working Party Meeting envisaged for 26 March; and (ii) conclude the pending bilateral market access negotiation. The Arab Group emphasized that the 2012 conclusion of the Accession of Yemen would deliver a positive signal and provide impetus for stability in Yemen and the region, and increase the credibility of the WTO.

The Secretariat briefed the IGA on: (i) the four 2012 Accession Priorities (Kazakhstan, Lao PDR (LDC), Serbia, and Yemen (LDC)); (ii) the progress in eight active accession processes (Afghanistan; Algeria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ethiopia; Seychelles; and, Tajikistan); (iii) Working Party Chairmanship vacancies; and (iv) technical assistance, capacity-building and outreach activities.

Members were also briefed on the implementation status of "China's LDCs and Accessions Programme". The implementation of the programme was well underway with the first two interns already working in the Accessions Division. Mr. Osakwe also noted that a roundtable on accessions best practices, also under the umbrella of "China's LDCs and Accessions Programme", was envisaged in May of this year in China.

Due to the continued heavy accessions programme envisaged for 2012 and the pre-eminence of substantive work and technical advice, the Accessions Division would have to continue to scale back on the delivery of technical assistance and outreach. The Director of the Accessions Division thanked Members (in particular, Australia, China, the EU, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the US) for the bilateral Technical Assistance provided to Acceding Governments in 2011. He notified Members that a workshop for African Acceding Governments would be organized in collaboration with the African Development Bank in 2012.

The French and Spanish translations of this Newsletter will follow shortly.

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² Accessions-related meetings are scheduled, based on the submission of substantive and qualitative inputs on the multilateral track of accession negotiations; and, meaningful offers and progress on bilateral market access negotiations.

ACCESSIONS MEETING SCHEDULE – EVOLVING CALENDAR³**31 January 2012**

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation		Conf Office Advised
					French Spanish English	Own	
[23 February 2012]	Azerbaijan	Agriculture Plurilateral	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	CR II	no	tbc	√
[24 February 2012]		9 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	CR II	yes	tbc	√
[8, 9 March 2012 tbc]	Tajikistan	7 th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice Pending	CR I	yes	tbc	√
		Plurilateral on Agriculture	Convening Notice Pending	CR II	no	tbc	√
[16 March 2012]	Lao PDR	8 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	CR II	yes	tbc	√
[19 March 2012]	Belarus	Informal/Formal Meeting	Convening Notice Pending	D	yes	tbc	√
[26 March 2012]	Yemen	Informal/Formal Meeting	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	E	yes	tbc	√
[29 March 2012]	Serbia	12 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (PM Only)	D	yes	tbc	√
[20 April 2012]	Kazakhstan	Informal/Formal Meeting	Convening Notice Pending	S1	no	tbc	√
[27 April 2012]	Seychelles	3 rd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	S1	yes	no	√
[second quarter 2012]	Afghanistan	2 nd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	no	
[second quarter 2012]	Algeria	11 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	tbc	
[second quarter 2012]	Ethiopia	3 rd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	tbc	
[second quarter 2012]	The Bahamas	2 nd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	tbc	
[14-15 February 2012]	General Council						
[1-2 May 2012]	General Council						
[25-26 July 2012]	General Council						

³Dates are suggested to assist planning by Members, Acceding Governments and the Secretariat. However, listed meetings are not automatic and will only go ahead on the basis of inputs from Acceding Governments, received with sufficient time for review by Members, normally a period of 4 weeks.