



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 third meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions in 2012 took place today, 23 March 2012. At today's meeting, the Secretariat consulted with Members on the Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings for 2012² (see Annex I). Twenty delegations attended the meeting.

The Secretariat briefed the IGA on: (i) the "four + 1" 2012 Accession Priorities: Lao PDR (LDC), Yemen (LDC); Kazakhstan, Serbia and Tajikistan; (ii) the progress in seven active accession processes; and (iii) technical assistance, capacity-building and outreach activities.

For transparency purposes, the Director of the Accessions Division (Mr. Chiedu Osakwe) informed Members that an *informal confidential facilitation process* was under way to assist and encourage the early conclusion of the outstanding negotiation between Ukraine and Lao PDR; and Ukraine and Yemen. This confidential facilitation process was undertaken in the context of the 2002 Guidelines on LDCs' Accessions and was sensitive to the MC8 Decision - WT/L/846 process. It was chaired jointly by Ambassador Smidt, the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on LDCs; Ambassador Yi, the WP Chairperson on the Accession of Lao PDR; and, Mr. Hartmut Röben, the WP Chairperson on the Accession of Yemen. At the request of the Coordinators of ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners, the Arab and LDCs' Groups, the three Chairpersons would report on the state-of-play of this confidential facilitation process, before the next WP meetings of Yemen and Lao PDR. It was underlined that the purpose of the facilitation exercise was to assist a mutually-satisfactory conclusion of the outstanding bilateral market access negotiations, through a confidential, non-politicized process. Members welcomed the information and expressed their support for this process. The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Arab Group; Pakistan, on behalf of the Asian Group; Jordan; and, Oman urged Ukraine to conclude its pending bilateral market access negotiations with Lao PDR and Yemen.

Members also enquired how they could, as a group or individually, support acceding LDCs; and what mechanisms were available to ensure that the 2002 Guidelines were operatively implemented and strengthened. Mr. Osakwe noted that WTO accessions were Member-driven. The mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the 2002 Guidelines were: (i) the relevant Working Parties; (ii) the standing item on accessions on the agenda of the Sub-Committee on LDCs; and (iii) the on-going informal consultations to strengthen the 2002 Guidelines, pursuant to MC8 Decision in WT/L/846. The results of the latter would be reported to the July 2012 General Council for decision-making by Members.

Mr. Osakwe informed Members that at the last Working Party meeting on the Accession of Tajikistan, this accession has emerged as a 2012 accession priority with realistic prospects for conclusion this year. He explained that the graduation to a 2012 accession priority is attributed to the "change of gears" by the acceding government, identifying WTO accession as a "top policy priority". A visit by the Working Party Chairperson was envisaged for the month of May.

Members were also briefed on the implementation status of the second pillar of China's LDCs and Accessions Programme, the "Roundtable for Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) on Best Practices in the WTO Accession Process" would take place from 29 May to 1 June of this year. For more information, please see: http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/beijingroundtable_e.htm.

Further to the announcement in the last Newsletter, the distribution of official documents in meeting rooms and at the Document Centre had been discontinued as of 1 January 2012, pursuant to paragraph 31 (f) of the recommendations adopted by the General Council in November 2011. Accession-related documents would need to be retrieved from the Members' website. Please see for further details Annex II.

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.

ANNEX I

ACCESSIONS MEETING SCHEDULE – EVOLVING CALENDAR³**23 March 2012**

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation		Conf Office Advised
					French Spanish English	Own	
27 March 2012	Ethiopia	3 rd Working Party	WT/AIR/3902 refers (PM Only)	E	yes	tbc	√
29 March 2012	Serbia	12 th Working Party	WT/AIR/3906 refers (PM Only)	D	yes	tbc	√
30 March 2012	Algeria	Informal Chair Consultations	Convening Fax 21/03/2012 refers (PM Only)	D	EN/FR only	tbc	√
[17 April 2012]	Kazakhstan	Open for Informal Chair Consultations	Convening Notice Pending (AM/PM)	CR II	no	tbc	√
[18 April 2012]	Kazakhstan	11 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM/PM)	CR II	yes	tbc	√
[30 April 2012]	Yemen	9 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	S1	yes	tbc	√
[1 June 2012]	Seychelles	3 rd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	S1	yes	no	√
[8 June 2012]	Afghanistan	2 nd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)	CR II	yes	no	√
[Week of 18 June 2012]	The Bahamas	2 nd Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	tbc	
[Week of 9 July 2012]	Lao PDR	9 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending (AM Only)				
[second quarter 2012]	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10 th Working Party	Convening Notice Pending	tbc	yes	tbc	
[1-2 May 2012]	General Council						
[25-26 July 2012]	General Council						

³ Dates 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.

ANNEX II

ACCESS TO OFFICIAL WTO DOCUMENTS FOR OBSERVER GOVERNMENTS

Observer Governments to the WTO are issued with a user ID and password which allow them to access the WTO Internet-based documentary database, *Documents online* from the Members' site. The address of the WTO Members' website is: <http://members.wto.org/members/>. The id and password are only available directly from the Head of Delegation to the WTO of the respective Observer Government.

This password enables them to access:







- all official documents that are *publicly* available
- the *restricted* official documents to which they have an entitlement

Observers should click on the link to *Documents online* on the home page of the Members' website to open the database and then enter their user ID and password:


WTO MEMBERS' SITE

What's available on the Members' website?

This site is reserved exclusively for the use of WTO Members and contains information and/or compilations of data not available on the WTO web site

	Headings	Description	Details
	About the WTO	E-Directory: WTO Members, Observers and Secretariat	
	Forthcoming meetings	Schedule of official WTO meetings; Documents for Meetings ; forthcoming Conferences, Meetings, Seminars, Symposia and Workshops	
	WTO resources	Documents online , Agriculture, Institute for Training, Integrated Database (IDB) and Consolidated Tariff Schedules (CTS) database, Linguistic resources (WTOTERM), Market Access Schedules, Notifications (CRN), Plurilateral Agreements, Publications, Services Schedules Online, Statistics	

Observer Governments should be aware that this user id and password do **not** allow them to access:

- the restricted sections of the Members' site (those protected by a key icon )
- *Documents for Meetings* on the Members' site

Observer Governments may use the *public* version of *Documents for Meetings* on the WTO website to view a calendar of Formal meetings with public document associations only. The address of the public version of *Documents for Meetings* is : http://docsonline.wto.org/gen_meetings.asp