



WTO Accessions Newsletter

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IGA-AGENDA:

The First meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place today, 30 January. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) LDCs accession negotiations and developments in respect of several Article XII LDCs; (ii) active non-LDCs' accession negotiations; (iii) accession WPs under "maintenance"; and, (iv) accession-specific technical assistance and capacity-building. The WTO Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings for the first quarter of 2014 (annexed). The IGA was informed of the re-composition of Secretariat Accession Working Party Teams (annexed).

ACCESSIONS OF LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

The IGA was informed that accessions remained an area of strategic priority for the Director-General Azevêdo. Secretariat resources were allocated to reflect the priority attached by the WTO to LDCs' accessions. In its updated report to the IGA, the Secretariat recalled that seven LDCs had acceded to the WTO since 1995 and eight were in the process of negotiating the terms of their WTO Membership. Of these eight, the state-of-play showed that: Afghanistan was technically maturing and was advancing towards its endgame stage and conclusion; Liberia was building up its technical capacity and was in regular technical exchange with the Secretariat regarding the preparation of inputs for the next meeting of its Working Party; Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tomé e Príncipe had neither submitted Memoranda on their Foreign Trade Regimes, nor initial market access offers; and, Sao Tomé and Príncipe was under Category III of Administrative Measures; Comoros had submitted its MFTR, although initial market access offers were still awaited; Ethiopia reflected no activity since July 2012; and, Bhutan and Sudan were dormant. The Secretariat continued to monitor the post-accession situation of Article XII LDCs. So far, the overall effects of domestic-reforms associated with their accession terms pointed to positive effects on their economies. Cape Verde that had acceded as an LDC had graduated. Samoa had graduated on 1 January 2014. Vanuatu was in the graduation queue. Graduation was a positive economic signal and was to be supported and not resisted.

The IGA welcomed the approval of Yemen's WTO membership at the MC9 in Bali. It appreciated the Secretariat's report that Afghanistan's accession was on a firm track for a 2014 completion. It was reiterated that the priority attached to LDCs' accessions would continue.

ACCESSIONS - TOOLBOX

- > Click here for a list of current [Accession Working Parties](#) and [Accession Working Party Chairpersons](#)
- > Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings (ECAM)
- > Secretariat Accessions Team
- > [WTO Director-General Annual Reports on Accessions](#)
- > Find all Article XII Members' specific accession commitments and related information provided in the Working Party Reports and Accession Protocols - in the [Accession Commitments Database \(ACDB\)](#)
- > [Handbook on Accessions to the WTO](#)
- > WTO Accessions Internship - "[China Programme](#)"
- > [Accession-Related Technical Assistance Activities](#)
- > For all official (de-restricted) documents relating to the accession processes of Article XII Members, click [here](#)
- > Accession Portal on the WTO Website ([En](#), [Fr](#), [Es](#))
- > All earlier [WTO Accessions Newsletters](#) are available on the Accession Portal of the WTO website, in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- > For enquiries related to the contents of the WTO Accessions Newsletter, send an e-mail to: Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org



The Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, and Yemen's Minister of Industry and Trade, H.E. Dr Saadaldeem Talib, at the official Accession Protocol signing ceremony at the 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali, 4 December 2013.

2014 ACCESSION WP FOCUS

Afghanistan: The accession of Afghanistan had significantly advanced and was technically maturing. It was advancing to its endgame and final stage. All bilateral market access negotiations had been concluded. The official signing of several bilateral agreements was scheduled for mid-February. The Secretariat had initiated the process of consolidating the deposited bilateral agreements to generate the Draft Schedules of Commitments on Goods and Services, which would be circulated to signatory Members for verification. The Draft Working Party Report (DWPR) was rapidly approaching its final version with only a few issues outstanding. Critical decisions were expected to be taken by Afghanistan soon on a limited range of issues relating to: customs, its fixed tax, the investment regime and IPRs protection. A revised DWPR would be circulated to Members, shortly. The delegation of Afghanistan would be in Geneva in February to work with Members and the Secretariat on the remaining aspects of its Draft Accession Package. The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for March 2014.

Azerbaijan: All inputs for the Working Party, including the revised DWPR, had been circulated in 2013. The next cycle of meetings, postponed at the request of Members due to the Bali Ministerial Conference, was now envisaged for 20-21 February.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: This accession was advancing to its final stages. Most bilateral market access negotiations had been concluded. Two bilateral market access agreements (with Ecuador and Panama) had been signed and deposited with the WTO Secretariat. On the multilateral track, additional outstanding work included the adoption of pending bills and the submission of an updated, final version of the Legislative Action Plan (LAP). The ball was in the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding decisions that would enable the conclusion of its accession, as soon as possible.

Kazakhstan: This was an advanced accession, although challenging and complex with a set of unresolved and outstanding questions. The major challenge revolved around the question of tariff adjustment, which was unique in accession negotiations, so far. Other outstanding issues included, agriculture, SPS, TRIMs, STEs, Headnotes to the Draft Goods Schedule, etc. The Secretariat had received responses and feedback from Kazakhstan to several questions from WP Members. Other answers were still awaited. On services, Astana continued to review the Draft Consolidated Services Schedule in consultation with Signatory Members. A technical verification meeting would be convened by the Secretariat, in accordance with standard practice, after Kazakhstan re-submits the Draft Services Schedule to the Secretariat. The timing of the next cycle of meetings would depend on the resolution of a critical proportion of outstanding questions. Meanwhile, the Delegation of Kazakhstan was in contact with Members. No specific date was yet envisaged for the next cycle.

Serbia: This accession was at an advanced stage. Progress towards closure was subject to the enactment of outstanding WTO-consistent GMO legislation and conclusion of outstanding bilateral market access negotiations.

Seychelles: This accession was progressing. Two bilateral agreements on market access had been signed with Thailand and Japan. Seychelles was preparing its replies to questions and comments, submitted by Members. Technical assistance had been requested in the areas of: SPS, TBT, IPR and legal drafting. The Secretariat in coordination with other TA providers would provide accession-specific TA in these areas in the period from February to April.

Bahamas: Nassau was reviewing the draft Factual Summary prepared by the Secretariat. On the margins of the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali, Minister Pinder of the Bahamas had reaffirmed the commitment of Nassau to complete its accession negotiations, as early as possible. Technical assistance had been requested in several areas, including import licensing; TRQs; rules of origin; intellectual property protection; and the establishment of a standards bureau. The Secretariat was consulting with Nassau on an awareness-building programme on WTO membership and adjustment issues that are entailed in WTO membership. WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark was in conversation with Nassau regarding such an activity. Documentary inputs from Nassau were awaited before the next cycle of meetings of the WP could be convened.

MAINTENANCE WORK

The IGA was briefed on the progress in 4 other active accessions:

Algeria: This accession was progressing. The Algerian negotiating team was actively engaged. In 2013, the Secretariat had circulated the Q&A document, legislation notices and the Revised Goods and Services Offers submitted by Algiers. The Secretariat had forwarded the updated DWPR to Algiers for technical comments and factual updates, in December 2013. The Secretariat was in technical exchange with Algeria to process the inputs that had been received so far. The submission of a revised LAP and its accompanying draft and enacted legislation; as well as the Questionnaire on State-trading Enterprises, remained outstanding. In Bali, Ambassador D'Alotto (Argentina), WP Chairperson, held a bilateral meeting with the Algerian Delegation to review issues essential for continued progress on the Accession of Algeria. The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for end-March 2014, if all required negotiating materials were available.

Belarus: In October/November 2013, Minsk had circulated several required negotiating materials: a revised LAP, revised SPS/TBT checklists, replies to Members' questions, updated information on the implementation of the CVA and TRIPS, a revised Questionnaire on ILPs. Several bills and the revised Services and Goods Offers were still outstanding. No WP cycle of meetings was envisaged at this time.

Comoros: The Memorandum of Foreign Trade Regime had been circulated in October 2013. The deadline for the submission of comments and questions had been set for 31 January 2014. In Bali, the Secretariat met with the Minister of Commerce of Comoros. Comoros was encouraged to submit, as soon as possible, its initial market access offers on goods and services, a LAP and any request for technical assistance.

Liberia: In Bali, the WP Chairperson, Ambassador Joakim Reiter (Sweden), Arancha Gonzalez, ITC Executive Director and the Director of the Accessions Division met with the Liberian Minister of Commerce and Industry. It was agreed that the Secretariat would design a joint capacity building workshop to improve the Liberian officials' understanding of WTO rules and strengthen their capacity to prepare negotiating materials for the WP. In collaboration with the Swedish National Board of Trade, the WTO Secretariat was designing an accession-specific activity. An intern from Liberia would be financed from the China Programme.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The IGA was briefed on technical assistance and capacity-building activities underway. Specific to assistance preceding this First IGA, the Secretariat conveyed its appreciation to IGA Members, in particular China, EU and the US. Members were urged to sustain this assistance. Accession-specific support from the International Trade Center was acknowledged.

ANNEX 1

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)¹

29 January 2014

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
					EN-FR-ES	Own
Thursday, 30 January 2014	IGA	1 st 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Fax dated 23 January 2014 refers	S2	NO	NO
[Thursday, 20 February 2014]	Azerbaijan	Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (PM)	Convening Notice pending	D	NO	NO
[Friday, 21 February 2014]	Azerbaijan	11 th Working Party meeting (AM)	Convening Notice pending	D	YES	NO
[March 2014]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[1 st Quarter 2014]	Algeria	12 th Working Party meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to:

- Ms. Souda Tandara-Stenier (Tel: 022 739 6321; e-mail: Souda.Tandara-Stenier@wto.org);
- Ms. Nadia Ferdi Demierre (Tel: 022 739 6560; e-mail: Nadia.Ferdi@wto.org); or
- accessions@wto.org

¹ 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 at least four weeks.

Scheduling and confirmation of meetings also take account of the distribution of meetings in any particular period, and hence, the capacity of Members and the Secretariat alike to cope.

ANNEX 2

ACCESSIONS DIVISION RESPONSIBILITIES 2014

ACCESSIONS MANAGEMENT

Accession Working Party Management

Accession Working Party	Secretary	Co-Secretary	Administrative Manager/Support
Chiedu Osakwe, Director, Accessions Division			
1. Afghanistan*	Varyanik	Tebagana	Ferdi Demierre
2. Algeria	Sekkate	Ferdi Demierre	Ferdi Demierre
3. Andorra	accessions@wto.org - No Activity		
4. Azerbaijan	Pardo de León	Sekkate Varyanik	Tandara-Stenier
5. Bahamas	Lee	Okenwa	Tandara-Stenier
6. Belarus	Oshikawa	Varyanik	Tandara-Stenier
7. Bhutan*	Oshikawa	Baral	Tandara-Stenier
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina	Beslać	Okenwa	Tandara-Stenier
9. Comoros, Union of the*	Sekkate	Tandara-Stenier	Tandara-Stenier
10. Equatorial Guinea*	Sekkate	-	Ferdi Demierre
11. Ethiopia*	Varyanik	Tebagana	Ferdi Demierre
12. Iran, the Islamic Republic of	Varyanik	Sekkate	Ferdi Demierre
13. Iraq	Varyanik	Lee	Ferdi Demierre
14. Kazakhstan	Oshikawa	Varyanik Sekkate	Ferdi Demierre
15. Lebanese Republic	Pardo de León	Sekkate	Ferdi Demierre
16. Liberia*	Lee	Baral	Tandara-Stenier
17. Libya	Pardo de León	Baral	Ferdi Demierre
18. Sao Tome et Principe*	Sekkate	Tebagana	Ferdi Demierre
19. Serbia	Beslać	Okenwa	Tandara-Stenier
20. Seychelles	Beslać	Okenwa	Tandara-Stenier
21. Sudan*	Lee	Sekkate	Ferdi Demierre
22. Syrian Arab Republic	Beslać	-	Ferdi Demierre
23. Uzbekistan	Lee	Varyanik	Tandara-Stenier

* Least-developed countries (LDCs)

ACCESSIONS DIVISION RESPONSIBILITIES 2014

Non-Working Party Workload Distribution

Responsibility	Professional	Administrative Manager/ Support
Director-General's Annual Accession Reports	Director & Professional (rotating) (2014: Lee)	Ferdi Demierre
Assisting the Director / Acting in the absence of the Director	Oshikawa	Tandara-Stenier, AA
Informal Group on Accessions	Pardo de León	Tandara-Stenier
WTO Accessions Newsletter (monthly)	Director & Varyanik	Rotating interns Tandara-Stenier
China Programme / MOU / Round Tables Pillar	Director & Oshikawa	Ferdi Demierre
China Programme / MOU / Accessions interns Pillar	Oshikawa & Tandara-Stenier	
TA Focal Point / Annual Outreach	Pardo de León	Ferdi Demierre
LDC Focal Point	Oshikawa	Rotating interns
Databases:		
– Accessions Commitments Database (ACDB)	Sekkate (Maintenance)	Rotating interns (Data transfer)
– Market Access Register	Ferdi Demierre (Design and Maintenance)	-
– Accessions Information Management Database (AIMS database) - Work in progress	Beslać (Development - Phases 1 to 3); Sekkate (Design, Interface, Maintenance - Phases 4 to 5)	Tandara-Stenier Intern (IT background)/ To be recruited (Development - Phases 4 to 5)
– Trade performance of Article XII Members	Sekkate (Maintenance / Market Intelligence Section)	-
Accessions Website Update	Working Party Secretaries	Rotating interns
Accession <i>acquis</i> stock-taking project	Accessions Division	

- David Shark, Supervising Deputy Director-General

ACCESSIONS STAFF DISPOSITION:

- Director;
- 6 Professionals;
- 2 Administrative Managers;
- 5 rotating China's LDCs and Accessions Programme interns; and
- 2 regular Accessions Division interns.