



WTO Accessions Newsletter

...safeguarding and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system

IGA-AGENDA:

The Second meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place on 27 February. 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"; (iv) Accession best practices: bilateral market access negotiations and enactment of WTO-consistent legislation and, (v) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The WTO Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings for the first quarter of 2014 (annexed).

2014 LDC WP FOCUS

The IGA was informed that the accession of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) remained an area of strategic priority for the Organization. Currently, eight LDCs were at various stages of their accession negotiations. Afghanistan and Comoros were active; Liberia was undertaking analysis and building its trade capacity. No recent inputs had been received from Ethiopia. Sudan was inactive. Bhutan and Equatorial Guinea were dormant. Sao Tomé and Príncipe was under Category III of Administrative Measures (see document WT/BFA/W/274).

Afghanistan: This accession was queued up for conclusion in March. All bilateral market access negotiations had been concluded, signed and deposited with the Secretariat. The Draft Consolidated Schedules of Concessions and Commitments on Goods and Services had been circulated to Signatory Members for verification on 13 February. The technical verification meeting with signatory Members, chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division, took place on 27 February. The meeting concluded the process of Technical Verification. The Draft Accession Package of Afghanistan would be circulated on 3 March. As part of the Draft Package, the draft ITA Schedule had been circulated on 25 February to the ITA participants for verification at the next meeting the ITA Committee. The next, envisaged to be the final WP meeting on the Accession of Afghanistan, has been scheduled for 27 March.



*Accession of Afghanistan - Technical Verification Meeting -
27 February 2014*

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

OTHER 2014 ACCESSION WP FOCUS

Bosnia and Herzegovina: This accession was advanced. However, there had been no accession-related developments since the last IGA Meeting. The ball was in the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding decisions on the timing for the conclusion of its accession. Members stood ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina to cross the finishing line.

Kazakhstan: This was an advanced accession of economic significance. However, outstanding questions were complex and challenging. Progress on this accession depended on resolution of the tariff adjustment question and associated compensation matters with Members, with which Kazakhstan had signed bilateral market access agreements. Other outstanding issues remained in the areas of SPS, Agriculture and TRIMs, along with other unresolved issues in the Draft Working Party Report. On services, the Secretariat still awaited the Draft Schedule from Astana before convening relevant Members to a Technical Verification Meeting. Kazakhstan had submitted, recently, inputs for the Draft WPR, including replies to Members' questions, a revised LAP, revised Agriculture Supporting Tables, replies to Members' questions on Agriculture. The timing of the next cycle of meetings would depend on the resolution of outstanding issues in consultation with WP Members.

Serbia: This accession was advanced. However, there had been no recent accession-related developments, except the deposit in the Secretariat of Serbia's Bilateral Market Access Agreement with India.

Seychelles: This accession was progressing. Seychelles was updating negotiating inputs, including replies to questions from Members. Bilateral Market Access negotiations were on-going. Outreach and technical assistance for the Negotiating Team in Victoria, to be delivered by the Secretariat, had been planned, as follows: TBT (24-25 March); IPRs Protection (26-28 March); and, SPS (30 April-02 May).

Bahamas: Negotiating Inputs for the next cycle of meetings were outstanding. WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark, accompanied by the Secretary of the Working Party, were scheduled to visit Nassau in April. Main objectives of this mission would be to review with the Government the technical state-of-play on the substance of its accession and identify "Next Steps".

MAINTENANCE WORK

The Secretariat reported to Members in the IGA the technical state-of-play on several active accessions:

Algeria: Progress was being made. The Secretariat was in technical exchange with Alger to process negotiating inputs for the next cycle of meetings. Inputs submitted, included the revised LAP and accompanying draft and enacted legislation and the Questionnaire on State Trading Enterprises (STEs). The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for end March.

Azerbaijan: The most recent cycle of meetings had taken place on 20-21 February. H.E. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, the Chief Negotiator had indicated that Government continued to attach priority to its accession in the context of its economic diversification strategy. As follow-up to this 11th Cycle of Meetings, Azerbaijan had undertaken to submit two sets of updated Agriculture Supporting Tables (with 10% *de minimis* and 5% *de minimis*). Baku would continue with amendment and enactment of WTO-consistent legislation. The deadline for the submission of written questions from Members was set for 21 March.



Accession of Azerbaijan - 11th Working Party Meeting -
21 February 2014

Belarus: Between October and November 2013, Minsk had submitted various documents, including a revised LAP; replies to Members' questions, revised SPS/TBT checklists, updated information on the implementation of the CVA and TRIPS, and a revised Questionnaire on ILPs. The Secretariat and Belarus were in contact to review next steps.

Comoros: The MFTR had been submitted in October 2013 and subsequently circulated to WP Members.

ACCESSION BEST PRACTICES: BILATERAL MARKET ACCESS NEGOTIATIONS AND ENACTMENT OF WTO-CONSISTENT LEGISLATION

The Secretariat reviewed with Members in the IGA on long-standing accessions best practices related to bilateral market access negotiations and enactment of WTO-consistent legislation. These "best practices" remained in use to safeguard the principles and disciplines of the rules-based MTS.

On bilateral market accession negotiations, it was reiterated that once agreements were concluded and signed, they had to be deposited with the Secretariat, as the Director-General was the Depositary of the Agreements of the Organization. Thereafter, the Secretariat consolidated and

circulated the results. This marked the end and "conclusion" of bilateral market access negotiations. Members had refrained from tabling market access requests, once the consolidated draft schedules had been circulated. This practice had to be preserved.

Recently, WP Chairpersons were engaged to introduce greater predictability, transparency and discipline to the process of bilateral market access negotiations, without abridging the right of Members to request bilaterals. As individual accessions were of long duration, there was ample time for Members to do so. When an accession approached an *endgame stage*, Chairpersons suggested indicative time-frames to assist planning and organization, so as to discipline the process. To this end, Members, who so wished, are invited to "request" bilateral market access negotiations, within a reasonable time-frame. The process and results of bilateral negotiations would remain confidential.

On WTO-consistent legislation and accompanying regulation, the practice in force was that all draft legislation (bills) had to be enacted and accompanying regulation adopted prior to membership, without prejudice to negotiated and agreed transition periods.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The IGA was briefed on upcoming technical assistance and capacity-building activities. The Secretariat had organized a workshop for Iraqi officials, scheduled for 17-21 March in the WTO. It was being sponsored by the United States Department of Commerce.

The Secretariat would also participate at a training activity for Liberian Officials in early March in Stockholm.

ACCESSIONS DIVISION ANNUAL RETREAT

The Accessions Division held its Annual Retreat on 7 February at the Château de Divonne. The purpose of the Retreat was to organize its work with WTO Members and Acceding Governments. DDG David Shark participated in the Retreat and reviewed the priorities of the new WTO Senior Management.



*Accessions Division Annual Retreat - Château de Divonne -
7 February 2014*

ANNEX 1

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)¹

27 February 2014

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
					EN-FR-ES	Own
Thursday, 27 February 2014	Afghanistan	Goods Schedule Verification – Closed meeting for Signatory Members only (AM)	Convening Fax dated 18 February 2014 refers	B	NO	NO
		Services Schedule Verification - Closed meeting for Signatory Members only (PM)	Convening Fax dated 18 February 2014 refers	B	NO	NO
[Wednesday, 26 March 2014]	IGA	3 rd 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	S3	NO	NO
[27 March 2014]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[Second half of March]	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.