



WTO Accessions Newsletter

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

IGA-AGENDA:

The Third meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place on 26 March. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) the status of LDCs' accession negotiations; (ii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (iii) Accession WPs under "maintenance"; (iv) Accession best practices and results: in relation to enforceable specific obligations, the rule of law, domestic reforms and international cooperation; and, (v) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The WTO Secretariat reported to Members on the technical work in progress to update and unify the templates used by Acceding Governments to submit "Negotiating Inputs" to Members in the WP. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings for 2014 (annexed).



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting, 26 March 2014

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. Eight LDCs were at various stages of their accession negotiations. There had been no developments on these accessions since the last IGA meeting, except for Afghanistan (below). Afghanistan and Comoros were active. Liberia continued to build its trade capacity. Sudan and Ethiopia were currently inactive; Bhutan and Equatorial Guinea were dormant. Sao Tomé and Príncipe remained under Administrative Measures. The Accessions Division would present an Oral Secretariat Report on the State-of-play on LDCs' Accessions at the 71st Session of the Sub-Committee on LDCs scheduled for 4 April.

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

Afghanistan: This accession was queued up for conclusion. The Draft Accession Package of Afghanistan had been formally circulated on 3 March. The Draft Package contained the draft Working Party Report, the draft Decision of the General Council and the draft Accession Protocol; and, the Draft Goods and Services Schedules. The Legislative Action Plan (LAP) had been updated and circulated to Members. The Draft Accession Package was considered stable. No comments had been received either from WP Members or Afghanistan after 6 weeks in informal and 4 weeks of formal circulation. On 19 March, the ITA Committee had approved Afghanistan's ITA Schedule, thus enabling Afghanistan to become the 79th ITA Participant. Afghanistan would implement its ITA commitments upon WTO accession. The next Meeting of the WP (envisaged to be the final), although earlier scheduled for Monday, 31 March had been postponed at the request of Kabul. Members would be informed of the new date for the meeting as soon as possible.

ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES (WP) IN FOCUS

Bosnia and Herzegovina: This accession was advanced. In the second week of March, the WP Chairman H.E. Amb. Istvan Major (Hungary) had informally consulted with the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Secretariat and several parties on the state-of-play on this accession. The consultations had made evident that the ball was in the court of Sarajevo on the timing for the conclusion of its accession. Bosnia and Herzegovina required a restoration of proactive engagement to: (i) conclude its bilateral market access negotiations; (ii) enact outstanding draft laws; and, (iii) submit a revised LAP. Members stood ready to assist Sarajevo to cross the finishing line.

Kazakhstan: This was an advanced accession of economic significance. However, there had been no developments since the last IGA Meeting. Kazakhstan had been in touch with the Secretariat regarding its draft ITA Schedule, which was expected to be submitted in due course. WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark had been invited and had accepted to participate in the Astana Economic Forum on 21-23 May. His visit would include meetings with Kazakhstan's accession team.

Serbia: This accession was advanced. There had been no recent accession-related developments.

Seychelles: This accession was progressing. The National Assembly in Seychelles was reviewing and enacting WTO-consistent legislation. WP Members would be notified of the enacted legislation when these are submitted to the Secretariat. Bilateral market access negotiations were ongoing. The Secretariat was providing technical assistance for the Negotiating Team in Victoria, in specific areas of its Foreign Trade Regime and Law: 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. DDG David Shark, accompanied by the WP Secretary, would undertake a High-Level Technical Mission to Nassau from 7 to 11 April. The main objectives of this mission would be to review with the Government the technical state-of-play on the substance of its accession, engage with all relevant Stakeholders on WTO membership considerations and, if possible, identify "Next Steps".

MAINTENANCE WORK

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

Algeria: Progress was being made. The 12th WP Meeting was scheduled for 31 March. At the meeting, the Algerian Delegation would be headed by H.E. Mr. Mustafa Benbada, Minister for Trade of Algeria. The negotiating inputs submitted by Algeria for the meeting, included the revised LAP and accompanying draft and enacted legislation, and the Questionnaire on STEs.

Azerbaijan: The most recent cycle of meetings had taken place on 20-21 February. The deadline for the submission of written questions from Members had been set for 21 March. On 24 March, Azerbaijan had submitted its request to join the ITA. The draft ITA Schedule of Azerbaijan should be circulated soon.

Belarus: In February, Belarus had requested the update of the Factual Summary (FS), on the basis of the negotiating inputs submitted in October/November 2013. To follow-up on this request, the Secretariat met with the Delegations of Belarus and the Russian Federation, on 5 March. It had been agreed that Belarus would provide updated inputs on Agriculture, Investments, Ordinary Customs Duties, Other Duties and Charges, and Customs Union regulatory developments. Upon receipt of these inputs, the Secretariat would commence with the update of the FS.

Comoros: The MFTR had been submitted in October 2013 and subsequently circulated to WP Members. WP Members' questions on the MFTR had been forwarded to Comoros. Moroni-based experts were preparing replies to the questions and other inputs, e.g., the initial goods offer.

ACCESSION BEST PRACTICES

The Secretariat reviewed with Members in the IGA long-standing accessions best practices and ongoing results. These "best practices" were essential for safeguarding and strengthening the rules-based MTS. They reflected the big picture.

WTO accessions were an integral part of broader international cooperation. The results of accessions were legally binding commitments. WTO Membership was based on enforceable commitments to the rule of law and good governance. Through accessions, Members had the unique opportunity to assist acceding governments to consolidate the rule of law and strengthen domestic institutions. Results from accession were contributing to economic growth and enhanced welfare.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Seminar on WTO Accessions for Iraq, 17-21 March 2014

The IGA was briefed on technical assistance and capacity-building activities. The Accessions Division and the ITTC had organized a seminar for Iraqi officials, from 17 to 21 March in the WTO. The participation of Iraqi officials had been sponsored by the US Department of Commerce. The seminar covered the WTO legal framework and accessions procedures. The week-long activity also focused on the examination of the Iraqi foreign trade regime. The purpose was to re-energize Iraq's accession.

On 21 March, WP Chairman, H.E. Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), supported by the Secretariat, met with the Delegation of Iraq and the representatives of the US Department of Commerce. At the meeting, Iraq signaled its intention to intensify its accession negotiations and submit the required negotiating inputs: offers on goods and services; and its updated MFTR. Bagdad had decided to appoint a Commercial Attaché accredited to the WTO to be based in Geneva.



Meeting with H.E. Ambassador Hilale, Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Iraq, 21 March 2014

ANNEX 1

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)¹

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
					EN-FR-ES	Own
Wednesday, 26 March 2014	IGA	3 rd 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Fax dated 18 March 2014 refers	S3	NO	NO
[Monday, 31 March 2014]	Algeria	12 th Working Party meeting (AM only)	Convening Notice pending	W	YES	NO
[Wednesday, 30 April 2014]	IGA	4 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	S3	NO	NO
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party meeting (AM/PM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to:

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- 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.