



WTO Accessions Newsletter

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IGA-AGENDA:

The 4th meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place today, 29 April. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) the High Level Accession Mission to the Bahamas led by DDG Shark; (ii) the status of LDCs' accession negotiations; (ii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (iii) Accession WPs under "maintenance"; (iv) Revision and Update of the "Templates" for the submission of Accession "Negotiating Inputs"; and, (v) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2014 (annexed). WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark and H.E. Amb. McCook (Jamaica), Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of The Bahamas participated for Members' consideration of the first item.



NASSAU, The Bahamas - 9 April 2014. High Level Accession Mission to The Bahamas led by DDG David Shark. Meeting with The Hon. Ryan Pinder, Minister of Financial Services (BIS Photo / Eric Rose)

HIGH LEVEL ACCESSION MISSION TO THE BAHAMAS

WTO Deputy Director-General David Shark reported to IGA Members on the High Level Accession Mission to The Bahamas, which took place from 9 to 11 April. The mission's objectives were to: establish high-level contact with the authorities in The Bahamas; review the technical state-of-play of the accession; engage in conversations on accession challenges with key stakeholders; enhance awareness of the benefits of WTO membership; and, identify "next steps". Meetings were organized with Government Officials, Parliamentarians, the business community, the media, and the general public. The messages revolved around the economic and trade value of WTO accessions, the use of the accession process as an instrument for domestic reforms. DDG Shark hand-delivered the letter from Director-General Roberto Azevêdo addressed to H.E. Prime Minister Christie. The Bahamas appreciated WTO Secretariat engagement. They considered that it had contributed to improved understanding of WTO accession as an instrument for modernization, global trade integration and, the value of WTO membership.

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 Government reaffirmed its commitment to revamp its accession negotiations and accelerate the pace of its negotiations, by submitting required and outstanding Negotiating Inputs, the: Factual Summary; Legislative Action Plan, Goods Offer, and its Accession Roadmap. The indication was provided for a 2015 timeline for the conclusion of its accession negotiations. WP Chairman, H.E. Amb. McCook underscored the commitment of Nassau to advance rapidly on its accession. He urged Members to support the accession negotiations of The Bahamas, underlining that the Bahamian economy was of strategic importance in the Caribbean and no less in the financial services and tourism sectors. He considered that 2015 was realistic, with hard work, to advance the accession negotiations to conclusion.



Informal Group on Accessions Meeting - 29 April 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

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.

Yemen: The House of Representatives of Yemen had approved the Accession Protocol of Yemen to the WTO, on 28 April. The next step in the domestic ratification process would be endorsement and signature by the President. *De jure* membership would be effective 30 days after the instrument of ratification was deposited with the Director-General.

Afghanistan: There had been no accession-specific developments. The Draft Accession Package had been circulated approximately 2 months ago, on 3 March. The Package had stabilized. No comments had been received from Members. As soon as Afghanistan reverts, the next meeting of the Working Party would be scheduled.

ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES (WP) IN FOCUS

Bosnia and Herzegovina: This accession was advanced. However, there had been no developments since the last IGA Meeting.

Kazakhstan: Since the last IGA Meeting, Kazakhstan had submitted an updated SPS Chapter to the Secretariat. It was yet to be incorporated into the main body of the DWPR. Updated inputs should be circulated to Members, once a critical mass of inputs had been received for a meaningful next cycle of meetings. Kazakhstan had submitted its Draft ITA Schedule to the Secretariat. After it had been processed by the Secretariat, it would be submitted to the ITA Committee for verification and consideration by Members for approval. The Consolidated Draft Services Schedule, on the basis of which Astana has been consulting, was still awaited for re-submission to the Secretariat. The resolution of the question of tariff adjustment and associated compensation remained key to moving ahead and for progress on this accession. DDG Shark and Ms Maika Oshikawa, WP Secretary, were scheduled to take part in the Astana Economic Forum on 21-23 May. This 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 advancing rapidly. Finance, Trade and Investment Minister Pierre Laporte was providing strong and constant leadership to drive this accession. The National Assembly had enacted all outstanding WTO-relevant Bills. Remaining implementing regulations were currently being issued and promulgated. WP Members would be notified of the enacted legislation when these are submitted to the Secretariat. Bilateral negotiations were progressing, positively and constructively. Seychelles had submitted its draft ITA schedule. The Draft had been circulated to Members of the ITA Committee for their consideration, verification and approval. Seychelles was sustaining a steady flow of revised inputs for the preparation of updated Negotiating Inputs for the next Cycle of Meetings. The Delegation of Seychelles would be in Geneva from 1 to 5 May and longer, if necessary, to work with the Secretariat to facilitate the updated set of inputs. The next Cycle of Meetings was envisaged for the second half of June.

MAINTENANCE WORK

The Secretariat reported on the technical state-of-play on several active accessions:

Algeria: The 12th WP Meeting was held on 31 March. The negotiations were progressing, substantively, constructively and with increased tempo. The next cycle of meetings was envisaged for this year, depending on the timely submission of questions from Members and responses with associated inputs from Algeria. A plurilateral meeting on agriculture was envisaged, as part of the next Cycle of Meetings.



12th Working Party Meeting on the Accession of Algeria - 31 March 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Azerbaijan: The most recent cycle of meetings had taken place in February. On 8 April, the Draft ITA Schedule of Azerbaijan was circulated to the ITA Committee for review and consideration. Baku was in regular contact with the Secretariat for the preparation of its Negotiating Inputs for the next cycle.

Belarus: Minsk had submitted a range of Negotiating Inputs that included: (i) sections of the Factual Summary; and, (ii) updated Agriculture Supporting Tables. Additional inputs were forthcoming. Upon receipt of all Negotiating Inputs, the Secretariat would process these, in coordination with Minsk, and proceed to update the Factual Summary, before circulation to Members of the WP.

ACCESSION "NEGOTIATING INPUT" TEMPLATES / TECHNICAL NOTES

The WTO Secretariat had undertaken a comprehensive technical review of the templates of Questionnaires, Checklists and Information Notes used by Acceding Governments to submit negotiating inputs to Working Parties. Those were, namely: WT/ACC/1; WT/ACC/4 - Agriculture; WT/ACC/8 - SPS and TBT; and, WT/ACC/9 - TRIPS. The updated templates had been unified into one single document; and, took account of the evolution in WTO rules and accession-related practices over the last 20 years. The technical update had been completed. The updated templates would be circulated to IGA Members for review. Members were invited to provide technical comments, if any, to the WTO Secretariat: accessions@wto.org. Members were requested to submit their comments no later than 30 May 2014.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Accessions Division continued to provide accessions-specific technical assistance and capacity building in coordination with ITTC. The International Trade Centre (ITC) was organizing an "Accession-related Training" for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Sudan, scheduled for 12-16 May, in Geneva. The Outreach Cycle with WTO Regional Groups was envisaged to start after the Summer Break.



FES Seminar for journalists from Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine -
1 April 2014 - WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier

ANNEX 1

Evolving Calendar of Accessions Meetings (ECAM)¹

Date	Working Party	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
					EN-FR-ES	Own
Tuesday, 29 April 2014	IGA	4 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Fax dated 22 April 2014 refers	S3	NO	NO
[Tuesday, 27 May 2014]	IGA	5 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	S3	NO	NO
[Friday, 20 June 2014]	IGA	6 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	S3	NO	NO
[Second half of June 2014]	Seychelles	Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture (AM/PM)	Convening Notice pending	TBC	NO	NO
[Second half of June 2014]	Seychelles	6 th Working Party Meeting (AM only)	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[Friday, 18 July 2014]	IGA	7 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:

- 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.