



WTO Accessions Newsletter

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IGA-AGENDA:

The 10th and final meeting in 2014 of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) took place today, on 26 November. The meeting was chaired by the Director of WTO Accessions. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) Accession-related items that would feature on the agenda of the December General Council; (ii) LDCs' accessions; (iii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions; (iv) accession WPs under "maintenance"; and, (v) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2014 and the first quarter of 2015 (annexed).

ACCESSION-RELATED ITEMS IN THE AGENDA OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Accession of Seychelles: The Draft Accession Package of Seychelles had been adopted by WP Members, *ad referendum*, on 17 October. It had been re-issued by the Secretariat on 5 November (as WT/ACC/SYC/64 and its Addenda 1 and 2). It would be on the agenda of the General Council (10 December). When the provisional agenda is circulated to Members, in accordance with practice, the adoption of an Accession Package should normally be the first agenda item, for consideration and formal adoption. The Secretariat conveyed to IGA Members the appreciation of the Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for their support to bring the accession of Seychelles over the finish line.

DG's 2014 Annual Report on Accessions: Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had circulated his 2014 Annual Report on Accessions (WT/ACC/23) to WTO Members on 25 November 2014. Traditionally, the Director-General's Annual Report would also feature on the agenda of the December General Council. In accordance with practice, the Director-General would introduce the report, following which Members would be invited to comment. (The French and Spanish versions of the Annual Report would be available in the next few days).



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

LDCs' ACCESSIONS

Afghanistan: The Draft Accession Package of Afghanistan had been circulated to WP Members on 3 March. The Package remained stable. In November, the delegation of Afghanistan resumed its contacts with the Secretariat. Members would be updated on any substantive developments and on calendar matters in relation to the date for the next meeting of the Working Party.

Comoros: On 13 November, the WP Chairperson Ambassador Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), met with H.E. Mr. Said Ben Oussen, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Comoros WTO Chief Negotiator. Comoros signalled that the required inputs would be submitted in the first quarter of 2015. The inputs would include replies to Members' questions, initial market access offers on goods and services, a Legislative Action Plan (LAP) and, updates to the Factual Summary of Points Raised. The WP Chairperson suggested a work plan to assist Comoros in its preparation of inputs. The first WP meeting is envisaged for September 2015.



*Meeting with the Delegation of Comoros - 13 November 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

Liberia: The Accession of Liberia was a priority for next year. The Government of Liberia had set the objective for a 2015 completion of its accession negotiations. Its Initial Market Access Offers for Goods and Services negotiations had been circulated to WP Members on 11 November. The WP Chairperson, H.E. Mr. Joakim Reiter (Sweden), had invited Members to express their interest in holding bilateral negotiations with Liberia no later than 31 December. Other Negotiating Inputs were being reviewed by the Secretariat. The Liberian Negotiating Team had been intensively engaged on the technical substance. Inputs submitted included the Legislative Action Plan, replies to Members' questions, SPS/TBT Action Plan, and Questionnaire on Import Licensing Procedures. These inputs would be circulated as soon as they had been processed. The Director-General and the WP Chairperson had appealed to Members to engage with Monrovia, constructively so as to facilitate Liberia's accession.

ACCESSION WP IN FOCUS

Kazakhstan: There was a determination to conclude the technical work on the Accession of Kazakhstan in 2014, if the required outstanding decisions were taken by Astana.

The last Cycle of Meetings had been held from 10 to 12 November. The Cycle included five informal meetings: Plurilateral Meetings on Agriculture, SPS and Tariff Adjustment; Small Group Consultations on the Draft WP Report; and, a Transparency Session. Since the November Cycle, consultations between Kazakhstan and Members to resolve outstanding issues were intensive and on-going.

The Draft Working Party Report (DWPR) was largely stabilized. Two paragraphs remained outstanding in the body of the DWPR. At the same time, gaps were yet to be filled in the sections on SPS, Tariff Adjustment and Agriculture, based on decisions to be taken. On SPS, internal CU coordination was required to address questions relating to veterinary certificates, risk assessment and international standards and, competent jurisdiction between the national and CU/EAEU levels. On Tariff Adjustment, the key question was eligibility for participation in future tariff adjustment negotiations.

The Draft Services Schedule had been verified by Signatory Members on 26 September and set-aside for final adoption. Work was underway to generate the final revision of the Draft Goods Schedule. The results of the understanding reached on Tariff Adjustment, including the AVEs, had already been incorporated. The missing elements included headnotes, TRQs, and Agriculture domestic support and export subsidy commitments. Once these gaps were filled, the final Draft Goods Schedule would be circulated to Signatory Members for technical verification.



*Accession of Kazakhstan - November Cycle of WP meetings -
10-12 November (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

To advance this accession to conclusion, key decisions were required on Agriculture, SPS and Tariff Adjustment. If all necessary inputs were submitted by Astana, the WP Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Vesa Himanen (Finland), envisaged the next Cycle of WP Meetings in the week of 15 December.

Serbia: There were no accession-related developments. The Director Accessions and the WP Secretary would visit Belgrade from 15 to 17 December. In the course of the visit, the Secretariat would participate in the Seminar on WTO Accessions organized by the Faculty of Economics of the University of Belgrade, as part of the WTO Academic Support Programme. The visit also offered an opportunity for engagement with the authorities in Belgrade. Meetings with stakeholders and Ministries were being scheduled by Serbian authorities.

MAINTENANCE WORK

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

Azerbaijan: The revised goods offer was circulated on 25 November. The revised Draft Working Party Report would be circulated as soon as comments and factual updates were received from Baku. The next WP Meeting was envisaged for the first quarter of 2015.

Belarus: Minsk had signaled that inputs to update the Factual Summary would be submitted in the second week of December. Belarus would like to use the updated Factual Summary as a basis to re-activate its accession negotiations early in 2015. Minsk had also been advised to "offer members a full menu" by revising its market access offers on goods and services for circulation to WP Members.

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The 2014 Annual Outreach Cycle with WTO Regional Groups was concluded with the briefings for GRULAC (30 October), the African Group (7 November) and, the Asian Group of Developing Members (20 November). The Director Accessions thanked the Regional Coordinators for facilitating these briefings.



*Briefing on Accessions for the African Group - 7 November 2014
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

The Secretariat continued to provide demand-driven technical assistance to acceding governments.

Upon request from the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Accessions Division and the ITTC had organized a National Workshop on WTO Accessions which took place from 16 to 19 November, in Tehran. The workshop covered the basics of the WTO legal framework and WTO accessions mandate, policy, results and procedures.

ANNEX

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)¹

Date	Working Party	Time	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
						EN-FR-ES	Own
26 November 2014	IGA	09:00 – 10:30	10 th 2014 Informal Group on Accessions (AM)	Convening fax dated 19/11/14 refers	S2	NO	NO
[8-12 December 2014]	[29 th Geneva Week]						
[10-11 December 2014]	[General Council]						
[Week of 15 December 2014]	Kazakhstan	December Cycle of Working Party Meetings		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	YES
2015							
[29 January 2015]	IGA	1 st 2015 Informal Group on Accessions (AM)		Convening Notice pending	E	NO	NO
[1 st Quarter 2015]	Azerbaijan	12 th Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[1 st Quarter 2015]	Liberia	2 nd Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5 th Working Party Meeting		Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to: 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.