

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

WTO ACCESSION DEVELOPMENTS – SECRETARIAT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Fifth Session of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) – 28 May 2015.

Agenda:

- ✚ Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus: [Afghanistan](#), [Liberia](#) and [Kazakhstan](#)
- ✚ Accession Working Parties under Maintenance: [Azerbaijan](#)
- ✚ Accession-related developments – Expressions of interest in WTO accession: [Somalia](#) and [Timor-Leste](#)
- ✚ Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview (Dushanbe & Nairobi)
- ✚ WTO Director-General's meeting with the Accessions Division

Chaired by the WTO Secretariat (Director of the Accessions Division)

Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus

Least-Developed countries (LDCs)

Afghanistan: H.E. Mr. Homayoun Rasa, the newly appointed Minister of Commerce and Industries, addressed a letter to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo stressing his wish to finalize Afghanistan's accession. The IGA was informed that the draft Package, circulated in March 2014, would require technical updates to reflect developments in Afghanistan's legal and regulatory regime before the next Working Party meeting could be convened.

Liberia: The most recent cycle of meetings took place on 7 May 2015. At the May-cycle of meetings, consultations were conducted in different formats by H.E. Mr. Joakim Reiter, the Working Party (WP) Chairperson. Members and Liberia successfully concluded their review of Liberia's AGST supporting tables at the Secretariat-chaired Plurilateral Meeting on Agriculture. Liberia undertook to bind its agricultural export subsidies at zero, upon accession. At the formal and 2nd WP meeting, H.E. Minister Addy, Liberia's Chief Negotiator, stated that *'trade is the magic bullet for Africa'*. He underscored that WTO membership was a key pillar in Liberia's development and post-Ebola recovery strategy. He also reported the successful conclusion of Liberia's bilateral market access negotiations with 1 Member (Japan). The bilateral negotiations with 6 other interested WTO Members were advancing well and were on pace. The WP Chairperson invited Members to submit their questions/comments by no later than 4 June 2015. Liberia was tasked to submit its revised Legislative Action Plan together with draft and newly-enacted legislation also by 4 June. The next cycle of meeting would be convened in the second half of July. The purpose of this meeting would be to review a revised draft Report of the Working Party, which would be prepared by the WTO Secretariat in the lead-up to this meeting.



Bilateral Meetings on the margins of the 7 May cycle of meetings – Liberia and the US (top) & Signing Ceremony of Liberia – Japan (bottom)

ACCESSIONS TOOLBOX

- ✚ [Accession Working Parties](#)
- ✚ [Accession Working Party Chairpersons](#)
- ✚ [WTO Director-General's Annual Reports on Accessions](#)
- ✚ [Handbook on Accessions to the WTO](#)
- ✚ [Accession-Related Technical Assistance Activities](#)
- ✚ [Accession Portal on the WTO Website](#) ([En](#), [Fr](#), [Es](#))
- ✚ [Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings \(ECAM\)](#)
- ✚ [Accession Commitments Database \(ACDB\)](#)
- ✚ [WTO Accessions Internship - "China Programme"](#)
- ✚ [Accession processes of Article XII Members](#), click [here](#)
- ✚ [WTO Accessions Newsletters](#)

✚ Contact the WTO Accessions Secretariat: Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org

Progress Report on Accessions in 2015 Focus

Non-LDCs

Kazakhstan: The IGA was informed that Kazakhstan's accession was 'technically mature'. The draft Accession Package had been circulated over the course of the months of March, April and May. Working Party (WP) members were currently reviewing it. The draft Package was stable, except for the SPS-related chapter in the draft WP Report, which still required resolution and choices from alternatives.

The next and final cycle of meetings would be held in the second week of June, with the formal and final meeting being convened on 10 June 2015. In accordance with practice, H.E. Mr. Vesa Himanen, the WP Chairperson intends to invite WP members, at the final meeting, to consider for adoption, *ad referendum*, Kazakhstan's draft Accession Package (the "Report" of the Working Party). In the lead-up to this final and formal meeting, the WP would meet in an informal setting to agree to a resolution of bracketed SPS paragraphs (the aim was to reach an agreement and circulate the agreed text either in the night of 9 June or the morning of 10 June). The WP Chairperson would convene the final and formal meeting on 10 June 2015. At this meeting, he would:

- mandate the WTO Secretariat to integrate the agreed SPS text and re-issue the final draft Accession Package;
- suspend the formal meeting to give the WTO Secretariat time to re-issue the draft Package; and,
- reconvene later in June for formal action to adopt the draft Accession Package *ad referendum*.

Members would have the standard 4-week period for review prior to formal action by the General Council.



China-WTO Secretariat Joint Briefing for the African Group and the LDCs' Consultative Group, 1 May 2015, Geneva, Switzerland
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Samantha Evans)

Maintenance

Azerbaijan: Baku was in the process of preparing relevant replies to the questions/comments received from Members.

Expressions of Interest in WTO membership

Timor-Leste: The IGA was informed that Timor-Leste had submitted an application for WTO accession on 13 April 2015. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo had advised Timor-Leste to submit the required description of Timor-Leste's foreign trade regime. This was a requirement before the application could be formally considered. The General Council Chairman had already been briefed that Timor-Leste was in the process of preparing the outstanding component to complete its application.

Somalia: In May, the WTO Secretariat met with H.E. Mr. Abdurahman Abdi Osman, Somalia's Minister of Commerce and Industry. He informed the Director, Accessions that WTO membership was a priority for his Government. His Government aimed to use WTO membership negotiations as a tool to change the negative perception about Somalia; secure market access; attract foreign investments; and rise to the level of international standards and best practices.



Meeting with Delegation of Somalia on 6 May 2015, Geneva, Switzerland
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Samantha Evans)

Accession-Specific Technical Assistance and Outreach Activities: 2015 Overview

- A China-WTO Secretariat Joint Briefing for the African Group and the LDCs' Consultative Group took place on 1 May 2015. At this joint session, the WTO Secretariat consulted with these Groups on the planned 3rd and 4th China Round Tables, which will take place in Dushanbe and Nairobi respectively. The IGA was informed that both Groups welcomed the briefing, and expressed their full support for these two activities.
- The 3rd China Round Table, focusing on "Post-Accession", will take place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, next week, from 2 to 5 June. The aim was to focus on those Members and acceding governments that were facing challenges in the process of integrating into the global economy. The WTO Delegation would be led by Deputy Director-General David Shark with a message from Director-General Roberto Azevêdo for the host Government (and the Round Table). At today's IGA meeting, the Ambassador of **Uganda** and the representative of **Yemen** both expressed their appreciation for the work of the Accessions Division to facilitate LDCs' accessions. The Ambassador of **Montenegro** added her voice and underscored that the gains of WTO membership are significant – specifically in the area of market access and international standards and best practices. She thanked the Accessions Division for its work.
- The 4th China Round Table will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 12 to 13 December 2015, back-to-back with MC10. The Government of Kenya had agreed to host the Round Table, which is being sponsored by the Government of China and organized by the WTO Secretariat.
- Preparations were underway for the 2nd Global Seminar on Accessions; the 10-year Anniversary of Saudi Arabia's WTO membership; and, the launch of the book "WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons for the WTO at Twenty" by the WTO Director-General. The activities will take place from 28 to 30 September 2015, and had been designed to blend with this year's theme for the WTO Public Forum: "Trade Works"!

 For enquiries, contact: Acc-events@wto.org

The WTO Director-General met with the Accessions Division on 11 May 2015 to review the Division's 2015 work objectives.



What else happened since the last IGA meeting on 23 April?

Seychelles became the 161st WTO Member on 26 April 2015



EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)

DATE	WORKING PARTY	MEETING	STATUS	ROOM
2-5 June 2015	Dushanbe, Tajikistan 3rd China Round Table			
Tuesday, 9 June 2015	Kazakhstan	Plurilateral Meeting on SPS (AM)	Convening fax dated 22/05/2015 refers	W
Tuesday, 9 June 2015	Kazakhstan	Informal Meeting of the Working (PM)	Convening fax dated 22/05/2015 refers	W
Wednesday, 10 June 2015	Kazakhstan	20th Working Party Meeting (AM/PM)	WTO/AIR/ACC/3 refers	W
[Thursday, 25 June 2015]	IGA	6th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	E
[Thursday, 23 July 2015]	IGA	7th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	E
[End July 2015]	Liberia	3 rd Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
[27-28 July 2015]	General Council			
[27-31 July 2015]	Geneva Week			
[Thursday, 24 September 2015]	IGA	8th 2015 Informal Group on Accessions	Convening Notice pending	E
[TBC]	Afghanistan	5th Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC
28 September 2015	Second Global Seminar on Accessions			
29 September 2015	10 th Anniversary of the WTO Accession of Saudi Arabia			
30 September 2015	Launch of Accessions Book: WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons for the WTO at Twenty			
12-13 December 2015	Nairobi, Kenya 4 th China Round Table			