

WTO ACCESSIONS NEWSLETTER

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

SPECIAL EDITION: (i) WORKING PARTY ON THE ACCESSION OF LIBERIA ADOPTS ACCESSION PACKAGE AD REFERENDUM; (ii) WTO 20th ANNIVERSARY ACCESSIONS PROGRAMME; (iii) WTO 20th ANNIVERSARY ACCESSIONS E-LECTURE: "THE POWER & RELEVANCE OF THE WTO"

In its 8th year, the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia adopted by consensus and ad referendum the Accession Package of Liberia, at its 4th Session, on 6 October 2015. The Working Party concluded its mandate and agreed to transmit the Package to the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi for formal action.

The Working Party on the Accession of Liberia, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Joakim Reiter (Sweden / UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General), adopted the Draft Accession Package of Liberia, *ad referendum*, on 6 October, at its 4th Session. In accordance with standing practice, the adopted documents were: (i) Draft Report of the Working Party; (ii) Draft Schedule of Concessions and Commitments on Goods; (iii) Draft Schedule of Specific Commitments on Trade in Services; (iv) Draft Decision on the Accession of Liberia to the WTO; and, (v) Draft Protocol of Accession of Liberia. Working Party Members agreed to transmit the Package to the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi for formal action, thus concluding the mandate of the Working Party, in its 8th year after its establishment in 2007.

H.E. Mr. Axel Addy, Minister for Commerce and Industry and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession of Liberia, thanked the Working Party. He stated that the domestic reforms associated with the WTO membership would contribute to improving the business environment and lead to fair and healthy competition in Liberia, drive innovation, economic diversification and modernization. Strengthened institutions and adoption of global best practices would ensure resilience to external shocks. Liberia would implement its accession commitments and would hope to count on Members' support for a Post-Accession Support Strategy, being prepared by the WTO Secretariat.

12 Members intervened. They congratulated Liberia on this historic milestone. There was widespread recognition of the strong leadership of President of Liberia H.E. Ms Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the leadership of WTO Director-General. There was acknowledgement that the accession-specific commitments of Liberia would strengthen the WTO and provide Liberia with a long-term agenda for legislation-based domestic reforms. Members were impressed by the reforms undertaken by Liberia in market access and in the regulatory and institutional environment. They considered Liberia's accession as a "WTO success story" and one of the best gifts to the WTO at its 20th Anniversary.



4th and final meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Liberia, 6 October 2015 (WTO Secretariat Photos / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

ACCESSION OF LIBERIA: SELECTED NEWS ITEMS

Rebounding from Ebola, Liberia gets clearance to join WTO:

<http://www.cnbc.com/2015/10/06/reuters-america-update-l-rebounding-from-ebola-liberia-gets-clearance-to-join-wto.html>

Liberia: Pres. Sirleaf Submits Instruments to House for Enactment

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201509111645.html>

Liberia seeks WTO accession to recover from Ebola crisis

<http://www.gtireview.com/news/africa/liberia-seeks-wto-accession-to-recover-from-ebola-crisis/>

Liberia's Accession to World Trade Organization (WTO) Sealed

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201508240661.html>

Accession Terms of Liberia on Rules and Market Access for Goods and Services

The terms and conditions for the WTO accession of Liberia are designed to support its process of domestic reforms for diversification, modernization, faster growth and integration into the global economy. Its accepted obligations will rationalize domestic rules and will apply on an MFN basis to all WTO Members. Members in their statements congratulated Liberia for the commitment to ambitious reforms.

Liberia's final bound tariff rates (FBR) average approximately 26% for all products, 23.8% for agricultural products and, 27.2% for non-agricultural products. Tariff binding coverage is at 100%.

In services, there are market opening commitments of interest to business in telecommunications, insurance, banking, transport, tourism, distribution. These sectors will be significantly liberalised. Overall, commitments were accepted in 11 sectors and 102 sub-sectors.

At the Working Party Meeting, all Members considered the Accession Package of Liberia of high quality, even for an LDC, which would contribute to strengthening the rules-based Multilateral Trading System, providing long term agenda for sustained legislation-based domestic reforms in Liberia.

Formal action shall be taken by the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi on the Package adopted *ad referendum* today by the Working Party.



Statements at the 4th WP Meeting were made by: Lesotho for the African Group, Nigeria, US, EU, China, Chinese Taipei, Côte d'Ivoire, Yemen, India, Canada, Singapore and Japan, and, the Acceding Government of Liberia. (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Accession of Liberia: Summary Data

Application	13 June 2007
WP Establishment	18 December 2007
WP Chairperson	H.E. Mr. Joakim Reiter (Sweden / UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General)
WP Members	20 Members
WP Meetings:	4 Meetings
Multilateral:	31 accession specific commitments
Bilateral:	6 agreements on goods 3 agreements on services

Next Steps / Action:

- Approval of the Accession Package at the 10th Ministerial Conference (15-18 December): date to be confirmed
- Ratification of the Accession Package by the Legislature of Liberia. Ratification deadline agreed: 15 June 2016.



WTO 20th ANNIVERSARY ACCESSIONS PROGRAMME

The series of activities in the WTO Accessions 20th Anniversary Programme were held from 28 to 30 September 2015. The 3-part Programme included: (i) the Second Global Seminar on WTO Accessions; (ii) the Special Session to commemorate 10 years of the WTO Membership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA); and (iii) the Launch of the Book "WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: *Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty*" by WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo. 91 participants registered (42 acceding government representatives; 9 Article XII members; 40 "Friends of Accession"); and, 37 speakers were invited to this Programme.

The Second Global Seminar on WTO Accessions

The Second Global Seminar on WTO Accessions comprised 5 Panel Sessions. At these Sessions, panellists/discussants reviewed selected chapter contributions of the Accessions Book. In doing so, they reviewed the role of WTO accessions in the trading system and the global economy. There were exchanges on accession negotiation challenges and opportunities. Chief Negotiators of Article XII Members and Original Members held a rich exchange in narrating their experience in accession negotiations. There was appreciation of the session dedicated to the conversation amongst Working Party Chairpersons in respect of how they had facilitated the conclusion of their Working Parties. In spite of the spectrum of views, across the 3 days of conversation, the strong consensus that emerged was that the process of accession negotiations and their results had unquestionably strengthened the rules-based Multilateral Trading System and provided acceding governments and Article XII Members with a sound instrument for domestic reforms. The different narratives also made evident that accession negotiations had contributed to fostering bilateral, regional and international cooperation for trade. A shared message by all participants underscored the critical importance of a WTO Post-Accession Support Strategy.

Panel 1: "WTO Accession Negotiations – Negotiating Perspectives"

Panel 1 took place on Monday, 28 September 2015. In this session, former accession negotiators and trade experts/officials (EU and the Russian Federation), Ambassadors to the WTO (Australia, China, Brazil), and the first WTO Director, Accessions (1995-2009) shared their WTO/multilateral trade negotiating experiences. All of the speakers acknowledged WTO accession as an anchor for domestic reforms. Ambassador Galvão (Brazil) underscored the point that regardless of the "high costs of joining; the desire of governments to accede was a testimony to the power and appeal of this Organization". Ambassador McCormick (Australia) emphasized that an economy "that takes on more obligations is a stronger proponent to deliver outcomes and catalyse change". Ambassador Yu Jianhua of China noted that accession commitments should match the domestic reform agenda. There was consensus that the WTO was "delivering" through WTO accession negotiations. In the Q&A session, speakers and participants exchanged views on how to address domestic resource constraints, and post-accession challenges.



Panel 1: "WTO Accession Negotiations – Negotiating Perspectives": Moderator: Uri Dadush, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Speakers: Mr. Arif Hussain, First Director of the Accessions Division; Ms. Ruta Zarnauskaite, Policy Officer & Trade Negotiator DG Trade, European Commission; H.E. Hamish McCormick, Ambassador of Australia to the WTO, Cairns Group Coordinator; H.E. Mr. Yu Jianhua, Ambassador of China to the WTO; Mr. Maxim Medvedkov, Head, Department for Trade Negotiations Ministry of Economic Development, Russian Federation; H.E. Mr. Marcos Galvão, Ambassador of Brazil to the WTO.
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Panel 2: "Negotiating Experience: Challenges, Opportunities and Post-Accession"

Panel 2, on 28 September, focused on negotiating experience (challenges, opportunities and post-accession). At this session, current and former Government representatives from China, Lao PDR, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States shared their insights and first-hand experience of their governments' participation in WTO accession negotiations. The speakers discussed key WTO membership benefits, and identified some of the (recurring) challenges in WTO accession negotiations. All speakers agreed that WTO membership negotiations served as a tool for implementing domestic reforms, adopting international standards, and implementing international best practices. Several speakers highlighted that WTO accession negotiations often required a "change of mentality" and willpower in order to introduce relevant reforms at the political, economic and administrative levels. What was required was political will and determination on the part of the acceding government, on the one hand, and some degree of flexibility by the WTO membership, on the other.



Panel 2: "Negotiating Experience: Challenges, Opportunities and Post-Accession": Moderator: Bernard Hoekman, Robert Schuman Chair, Research Area Director 'Global Economics', EUI Florence. Speakers: H.E. Ms. Khemmani Pholsena, Minister of Industry & Commerce, Lao PDR; Ms. Svitlana Zaitseva, Ministry of Economic Development & Trade, Ukraine; Mr. Maxim Medvedkov, Head, Department for Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Economic Development, Russian Federation; Mr. Xiankun Lu, Professor, Institute for WTO Studies, University of International Business and Economics, China; Mr. Mark Linscott, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for WTO and Multilateral Affairs (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)



Panel 3: "Working Party Chairpersons' Perspectives": Moderator: David P. Shark, Deputy Director-General; Speakers: H.E. Mr. Clyde Kull, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the EU; Mr. Steffen Smidt, LDCs' Facilitator, Denmark; Mr. Joakim Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General UNCTAD.
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

Panel 3: "Working Party Chairpersons' Perspectives"

Panel 3, on 29 September, reviewed the perspectives and experience of accession Working Party (WP) Chairpersons. The Panel was moderated by Deputy Director-General Shark, and was composed by H.E. Clyde Kull, former Chairperson of Tajikistan's WP; Steffen Smidt, LDCs' Facilitator and Chairperson of Ethiopia's WP; and, Joakim Reiter, Chairperson of Liberia's WP. The speakers agreed that each accession process was unique and posed different challenges. The WP Chairpersons underscored that the 20-year history of WTO accession negotiations had demonstrated that any challenge could be overcome (including public health crises), if three conditions were met, i.e. existence of political will and leadership to join the Organization; a clear negotiating strategy, based on defined priorities; and, close cooperation with the Accessions Division. Liberia was a case in point. Clyde Kull noted that, for the work of WP Chairpersons, a good understanding of the economic and political domestic/regional dynamics was essential. Steffen Smidt discussed the enhanced LDC accession guidelines ('benchmarks'), and reviewed whether there was scope to further improve LDCs' accessions. Joakim Reiter underscored the point that WP Chairpersons had to have a clear understanding of the acceding economies' objectives, especially in the case of LDCs. The acceding economies' objectives would need to be matched by domestic reforms. He commended the efforts of the Accessions Division in facilitating WTO accessions, and considered the WTO Secretariat as an extended (and reliable) arm of the WP Chairperson. In his view, the 'real winners of completed WTO accession negotiations were domestic entrepreneurs that would benefit from increased FDI and a predictable business climate'.

Saudi Arabia Special Anniversary Session: 10 years of WTO Membership – Looking Back and Looking Ahead

The Special Session commemorating the 10-Year of the WTO membership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia took place on 29 September 2015. Ambassador Roderick van Schreven (Netherlands) chaired the session. The panel consisted of high-level speakers from Saudi Arabia and the WTO Secretariat. The lead panellist was H.E. Minister Tawfig Fawzan Alrabiah, Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The speakers discussed various aspects of Saudi Arabia's accession to the WTO in 2005, and Saudi Arabia's role in the Multilateral Trading System. This special session also included a video screening entitled "Land of Opportunities", as well as the launch of a Lowndes Publication on Saudi Arabia's 10-Year Anniversary of its WTO accession (which included a foreword by WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo).



Saudi Arabia Special Anniversary Session: Moderator: H.E. Mr. Roderick van Schreven (Netherlands); Speakers: H.E. Mr. Tawfig Fawzan, Alrabiah, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Saudi Arabia; H.E. Dr. Saad AlKasabi, Governor of Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization, Saudi Arabia; H.E. Dr. Abdullah Al Obaid, Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry for Foreign Trade, Saudi Arabia; Mr. Chiedu Osakwe, Director, Accessions Division; Mr. Willy Alfaro, Director, TPR Division; Eng. Abdul Majeed Al-Maymoon, VP, Industrial Clusters Enabling Specialist; Mr. Rupert Prior, Lowndes Group. (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)



Panel 4: "Salient features in WTO Accession Protocols"

The 4th session of the Global Seminar on WTO accessions was held on 29 September. This session focused on salient features in WTO accession protocols. The panel consisted of WTO Secretariat staff; sister agencies (ITC; WIPO; World Bank; IMF); and, academia (GWU). The importance of comprehensive stakeholder inclusivity and support from top leadership during WTO accession negotiations were underscored as two of the most essential factors for a successful accession negotiation outcome. The debate on "WTO+" commitments resulted in the unanimous Panel Conclusion that, *"in spite of the more stringent commitments required with every accession, the benefits outweighed the costs"*. The speakers also agreed that domestic reforms were necessary to foster good governance and economic development. Acceding governments were advised to complete their WTO accession negotiations as soon as possible, whilst optimally utilizing the technical assistance on offer.

Panel 4: "Salient Features in WTO Accession Protocols": Moderator: Emil Bolongaita, Executive Director, Carnegie Mellon University, Australia; Speakers: Mr. Chiedu Osakwe, Director, Accessions Division; Ms. Valerie Hughes, Director, Legal Affairs Division; Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, International Trade Centre; Mr. Robert Anderson, Counsellor, Intellectual Property Division; Ms. Joan Apecu, Head, TNC Section, Council and TNC Division; Ms. Alexandra Bhattacharya, Associate Program Support Officer for LDCs, WIPO; Ms. Claire Hollweg, Consultant, Trade Practice, World Bank; Mr. Steve Charnovitz, Professor, George Washington University; Mr. Alexei Kireyev, Senior Economist, International Monetary Fund. (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

ACCESSIONS BOOK LAUNCH

The WTO 20th Anniversary Accession Programme culminated on 30 September with the launch of the WTO-Cambridge University Press co-publication: "WTO Accessions and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty". In moderating the launch, the Director, Accessions introduced the speakers and gave some insights into the "editorial marathon" that had gone into this co-publication project. The book contained the contributions from 54 authors. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo launched the Accessions Book and underscored that WTO accession was the success story of the Organization. H.E. Amina Mohamed (Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya); Uri Dadush (co-editor); and, Kim Hughes (CUP) also spoke briefly on the impact of WTO accessions on the global economy; and, the co-publication. The book demonstrated that the results from WTO accession negotiations produced "real" domestic reforms; clarified, updated and deepened trade rules; had made the trading environment more transparent and predictable; and, had enhanced the rule of law and promoted good governance. Kim Hughes (CUP) informed participants that this co-publication had set the record of the largest number of contributors for any single volume in the 15-year history of the WTO and Cambridge University Press publishing partnership.



Panel 5: "WTO Accessions: the Trading System and the Global Economy"

The WTO 20th Anniversary Accession Programme was concluded with a 5th and final high-level panel session (30 September). The session was moderated by Mark Linscott (US). Panellists reviewed WTO accessions, the trading system and the global economy. Bernard Hoekman (Robert Schuman Chair) pointed out that since the global financial crisis, trade growth had stopped. In response, economies had to review their trade policies, leverage new technologies, and shift to services-driven trade for future growth. A statement from Minister Andrey Slepnev of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) was read out, on his behalf, underscoring (i) the EEC's efforts to implement the accession obligations of Kazakhstan's Accession Protocol; and (ii) the EEC's expectation that Belarus' accession negotiations would be a 2016 priority. H.E. Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed (Kenya) emphasized that the lack of good governance and leadership were the main challenges in Africa. Anabel González (World Bank) underscored that WTO membership negotiations resulted in economic development, job creation, and trade growth. Alexei Kireyev (IMF) discussed the macroeconomic implications of WTO accessions, reviewing the short-term costs vs. its long-term gains.

Panel 5: "WTO Accessions, the Trading System and the Global Economy": Moderator: Mr. Mark Linscott, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for WTO and Multilateral Affairs; Speakers: Mr. Bernard Hoekman, Robert Schuman Chair, Research Area Director "Global Economics", EUI Florence; Mr. Andrey Slepnev, Minister for Trade, Eurasian Economic Commission; H.E. Ms. Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Kenya; Ms. Anabel González, Senior Director, World Bank Group Global Practice on Trade and Competitiveness; Mr. Alexei Kireyev, Senior Economist, International Monetary Fund.
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)



WTO 20th ANNIVERSARY ACCESSIONS E-LECTURE: "THE POWER & RELEVANCE OF THE WTO"

The first-ever 'WTO E-Lecture/Webinar' took place today, 7 October. It was organized as part of the WTO 20th Anniversary Accessions Events and, was co-organized by the WTO Accessions Division and the ITTC E-Learning Unit. At this first e-lecture, Mr. Chiedu Osakwe, the Director, Accessions, spoke on "The Power & Relevance of the WTO". Following the lecture, he engaged in a dialogue with 54 participants that accessed the lecture from across the world, including from Bhutan, China, India, Kenya, Mongolia, Myanmar and Switzerland. For those who missed the e-lecture today, the recording of the session will be made available soon on the WTO Accessions Gateway. The next and 2nd e-lecture, as part of this series, is scheduled for 14 October 2015, and will focus on "Macro WTO and Micro GPA accessions". The speakers will be Robert Anderson and Anna Caroline Müller from the WTO Intellectual Property Division.

