

This message initiates a monthly process of contact with and provision of information to assist all the acceding governments with preparations for meetings and negotiations associated with their accession. It is one of several practical steps by Director-General Pascal Lamy to improve transparency on accessions matters.

NOTE ON ACCESSIONS INFORMATION FOR ACCEDING GOVERNMENTS

The WTO accession process is fundamentally Member-driven, with formal scope for the good offices and facilitation of least-developed countries' accessions by the Director-General in accordance with the General Council Decision on the Accession of Least-Developed Countries (WT/L/508).

The Informal Group on Accessions is the forum where Members and the Secretariat meet to forge a work plan for the implementation of WTO work on accessions. The Group reflects the balance of the Membership, including regional coordinators¹ and Members traditionally active in support of WTO accessions. It meets in a four to six week cycle. At these meetings, Members provide guidance to the Secretariat on accession systemic issues; and, the Secretariat consults with Members on a work plan and calendar of meetings. The Director of the Accessions Division, Mr. Chiedu Osakwe (email: chiedu.osakwe@wto.org), chairs the Informal Group on Accessions and reports to the Director-General, Mr. Pascal Lamy. Mrs. Josefita Pardo de León (email: josefita.pardodeleon@wto.org), Legal Affairs Officer in the Accessions Division, serves as Secretary of the Informal Group on Accessions.

Accessions-related meetings are scheduled, based on the submission of substantive and qualitative inputs on the multilateral track of accession negotiations; and, meaningful offers and progress on bilateral market access negotiations.

On 23 July 2010, the Informal Group on Accessions held its most recent meeting. Twenty-three delegations attended the meeting. The Chairpersons of the Working Parties on the Accessions of Belarus, the Bahamas and Seychelles briefed Members on their respective visits to the acceding governments. Members considered that this was a step to further enhance transparency in the accession process. They requested that such reports should be presented after each visit to acceding governments, as meetings of several Working Parties were infrequent.

Members provided guidance to set the calendar of accession meetings for the second half of 2010. They converged on the importance of prioritizing accession processes, based on the degree of maturity and circulated documentation for Members' consideration. They agreed to work on seven accession priorities for 2010, namely, the three LDCs of Yemen, Samoa and Vanuatu; Serbia; Montenegro; the Russian Federation; and, Kazakhstan. Members advised that while substantive inputs were the basis for multilateral work in the Working Parties, market access offers and solid progress on bilateral negotiations were essential.

Working Parties are serviced by the Accessions Division. The current list of Secretaries and Co-secretaries of Accession Working Parties is hereby made available, please see the attached.

To conclude on a transparency note, in 2009, Director-General Pascal Lamy initiated an annual reporting system on WTO accessions. The 2010 Annual Report will be presented at the end-of year meeting of the General Council, in December.

¹ ACP Group, African Group, Arab Group, ASEAN, CARICOM, GRULAC, Informal Group on Developing Countries, LDC Group and Small and Vulnerable Economies.