



# WTO Accessions Newsletter

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## IGA-AGENDA:

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Group on Accessions (IGA) in 2014 took place today, 25 September. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Accessions Division. Members of the IGA were briefed on: (i) the developments on the Accession of Kazakhstan; (ii) LDCs' accessions; (iii) the state-of-play in active non-LDCs' accessions with special focus on Seychelles; (iv) accession WPs under "maintenance"; (v) contact from Somalia; (vi) WP chairmanships; (vii) 2014 Annual Report of the Director General on Accessions; and, (viii) accession-specific technical assistance and outreach. The Secretariat consulted IGA Members on the updated ECAM: Evolving Calendar of Accession Meetings for 2014 (annexed). H.E. Ambassador Vesa Himanen (Finland), Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Kazakhstan, participated and reported to Members on Item 1.



Accession of Kazakhstan - Plurilateral meeting on Tariff adjustment - 24 September 2014  
 Informal Group on Accessions Meeting - 25 September 2014  
 US-Seychelles - Signing Ceremony of Bilateral Agreement - 10 September 2014

## ACCESSION OF KAZAKHSTAN

Ambassador Vesa Himanen (Finland), Chairman of the Working Party (WP) on the Accession of Kazakhstan, briefed IGA Members on the state-of-play on the accession of Kazakhstan. This accession was moving in the right direction and rapidly progressing towards conclusion. Although more work was needed, the prospects for a 2014 completion remained high.

## 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](mailto:Acceding-Government-Newsletter@wto.org)

The WP Chairman expressed his appreciation to WP Members for the impetus and concrete support that they had injected to this accession. Progress had been assisted by the guidance and commitment from the political leaders to move Kazakhstan's accession to conclusion. The September Cycle of meetings, started on 22 September, was of critical importance. The accession negotiations had forged ahead, although there were areas, still lagging behind, where efforts had to be intensified.

Building on progress before the Summer Break, Astana and the Secretariat worked throughout the summer. On 30 July, the Secretariat circulated the Draft Consolidated Services Schedule to Signatory Members. This was followed by the circulation to Signatory Members of the Revised Draft Consolidated Schedule on Goods, on 26 August, which reflected the understanding in the Chairman's proposal on Tariff Adjustment. A report of the Transparency Session on the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty (EAEU) was also circulated. Starting from 1 September, Kazakhstan had submitted substantive negotiating inputs that had made the September Cycle possible.

So far, this week, the WP had met on Tariff Adjustment. The Fourth Revision of the Draft Goods Schedule had been reviewed. The outcome was positive, although there were technical questions to resolve and gaps to fill. The Plurilateral meeting on SPS, held this week, continued to show that this area still lagged behind. Work would continue in a "Job" Document; the chapter could not yet form part of the stabilising Draft Report of the Working Party. Exceptional negotiating efforts were required on SPS, to maintain the pace for a 2014 conclusion.



*Introductory speech by Ms Gulmira Issayeva, Vice-Minister for Agriculture of Kazakhstan - Plurilateral meeting on SPS - 23 September 2014 (WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)*

In the on-going process, meetings were issue-specific: such as SPS, Tariff Adjustment, the Goods and Services Schedules. Decisions were required by the Acceding Government on agriculture. Meetings were being held in

different formats, involving bilateral, trilateral, plurilateral and small groups, to ensure that the discussions were focused with the participation of concerned Members, and thus geared towards finding solutions on outstanding issues. An informal WP meeting would take place on 26 September.

Members appreciated the report, reiterated the strategic importance of the Accession of Kazakhstan and reaffirmed their commitment to resolve the outstanding issues, pragmatically, to conclude this accession.

## LDCs' ACCESSIONS

Afghanistan: There had been no accession-specific developments. The Draft Accession Package, circulated on 3 March, remained stable. The Secretariat had been in touch with the Mission of Afghanistan in Geneva. As soon as Afghanistan reverts, the next meeting of the Working Party would be scheduled.

Liberia: The work on this accession, now reactivated, was focused on preparing the required negotiating inputs. On 24 July, Liberian Trade Minister Axel Addy met with the WP Chairman with the Chairman of the Working Party on the accession of Liberia, H.E. Amb. Joakim Reiter (Sweden), and the Secretariat Team, to take stock of the state-of-play. Work was actively underway with regard to the preparation of market access offers, the LAP and, responses to Questions from Members. These were being processed interactively with Monrovia. More work was required. The Director Accessions stressed that although Liberia was facing serious public health challenges, it was working exceptionally hard on its accession. It was an example for other acceding governments. Liberia deserved Membership support and the Secretariat was providing it. The Director Accessions thanked the European Union and the United States, in particular, for intensified assistance provided to Liberia.

## ACCESSION WORKING PARTIES (WP) IN FOCUS<sup>1</sup>

Seychelles: This accession was at its end-game stage. The Director Accessions conveyed the appreciation of Director-General Roberto Azevêdo to the IGA Family and the Government of Seychelles for bringing this 18-year accession to the threshold of conclusion.

The Draft Accession Package of Seychelles had been circulated for the review of WP Members on 16-17 September. It comprised of the Draft Working Party Report and the Draft Goods and Services Schedules. In addition, a comprehensive set of updated supporting documents had been circulated, including checklists, action plans and a revised LAP. All documents were available on the Members' website, except for the Draft Goods and Services Schedules. These had been shared only with Signatory Members for technical verification at this stage, in accordance with accession practice.

The Secretariat-chaired Technical Verification Meetings for the Draft Goods and Services Schedules with Signatory-Members would be convened on Monday, 29 September. Signatory Members were invited to forward their technical corrections, if any, to the

<sup>1</sup> The priority focus in any given year is based on technical maturity.

Secretariat, by Friday, 26 September. The technical verification process was envisaged for completion on 29-30 September. At the conclusion of the TVM, the Draft Goods and Services Schedules would be made available to the entire WP. The Director-General would issue the Airgram for the next WP meeting, scheduled for Friday, 17 October, which was envisaged to be final. At this meeting, the Draft Accession Package of Seychelles would be on the agenda for consideration by WP Members for adoption, *ad referendum*.



US-Seychelles - Signing Ceremony of Bilateral Agreement - 10 September 2014

## MAINTENANCE WORK

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

**Algeria:** The Chairman of the Working Party on the Accession of Algeria, Ambassador Alberto D'Alotto (Argentina), would visit Algiers from 18 to 21 October. Meetings were envisaged with high level authorities in Government and with the Negotiating Team. The purpose would be to advance on the technical substance Algeria's accession negotiations and confirm high level political commitment, indispensable to advance any accession negotiations to conclusion. Members were invited offer advice, comments and questions to the WP Chairman before his Mission to Algiers.

**Azerbaijan:** In July, the Secretariat circulated the revised Agriculture Supporting Tables and the responses of Azerbaijan to Members' questions on agriculture. Baku had submitted replies to Members' questions, the Subsidies Checklist and the updated information for the Draft Working Party Report. These documents were being processed by the Secretariat for circulation.

**Belarus:** There were expectations that the Working Party would be effectively re-activated in the near future. The Secretariat had recently circulated Belarus' responses to Members' questions on Intellectual Property and the revised Agriculture Support Tables. As a Member of the Customs Union, Minsk was following the developments in the Accession of Kazakhstan closely.

Currently, it was working on the update of the Factual Summary document which included the draft commitment paragraphs.

## CONTACT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA

The Director Accessions reported to the IGA Family on the request by H.E. Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim, Minister of Posts & Telecommunication, to meet with H.E. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo. In the absence of the Director-General, Secretariat officials met with the Somalian Delegation, on 10 September. The delegation of Somalia conveyed a message from the President of Somalia to the Director-General Azevedo. The Government of Somalia would shortly address a communication to Director General Roberto Azevedo to explore for WTO membership. As conveyed, Somalia would like to embark on WTO Accession negotiations to build its institutions; strengthen the rule of law; advance trade and economic growth; and, positively modify the prevailing "stereotypes" of Somalia.



Meeting with H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Minister of Posts and Telecommunication (Somalia) - 10 September 2014  
(WTO Secretariat Photo / Souda Tandara-Stenier)

## WP CHAIRMANSHIPS

The IGA was briefed that the General Council had appointed: (i) H.E. Amb. Haluk Ilicak (Turkey) as WP Chairperson for Belarus; and, (ii) H.E. Amb. Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria) as WP Chairperson for Bhutan. The Secretariat had circulated the list of WP Chairpersons, which had been updated accordingly.

## 2014 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL ON ACCESSIONS

The IGA was briefed on the preparations for the Director-General's 2014 Annual Report on Accessions. The Report would be considered by Members at the end-of-year General Council in December. As on previous occasions, the 2014 Report should contain information on accession-related developments and state-of-play, as well as a thematic section. The 2014 thematic focus was on "post accession". IGA Members would be kept

informed on the preparation and substantive contents of  
**OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Accessions Outreach: The Annual Outreach Cycle with Regional Groups, initiated before the Summer Break with briefings for the Informal Group of Developing Countries (IGDCs), would resume in the next couple of weeks. The Accessions Division was in contact with the Coordinators to schedule meetings.

Astana International Conference: Director of the Accessions Division reported to the IGA on his participation in the Astana International Conference on "Kazakhstan's Role in a Globalizing World: Trade and Investments", on 4 September. The conference was structured on two Panels, introduced by Prime Minister Massimov. Invited Panelists included political leaders: former UK Prime Minister Blair, former Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, former President of Poland Aleksander Kwasniewski and Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy and EC President, to "advise" on what should be Kazakhstan's role in a globalizing environment.



*Astana International Conference - 4 September 2014*

Prime Minister Massimov, Economic Integration Minister Zhanar Aitzhanova and Economy Minister Dossaev, in their address to the Conference reaffirmed Kazakhstan's WTO membership as a strategic priority for the Government of Kazakhstan.

the 2014 Report.

Panelists underlined the strategic role of Kazakhstan as a country that stood at the crossroads of Asia and Europe; and, due to its foreign and trade policy, potentially was a both a pivot and a bridge between Asia and Europe. Panelists underlined that the contemporary character of the global economy was defined by trade integration, global value chains in an increasingly digitized economy, governed by the rule of law.

The Director Accessions conveyed the message from the WTO Director-General, in quote, and stressed that experience and history of the GATT/WTO suggested that it offered its Members a "legal framework, inter alia, to manage their trade relations and over-heated relationships within a system of trade law". The WTO had the most powerful and effective dispute settlement system in public international law. This was one of the major benefits of WTO membership.

Third China Roundtable: Two Accession Round Tables under the China Programme had been held to date: the first in Beijing, in May 2012, and the second in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, in October 2013. Members and Acceding Governments had found these Round Tables useful as a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices during and post accession. This year, the Secretariat had been in consultation with the Government of China (the MOU provider) and potential hosts for the Third China Round Table. The Secretariat was expecting to receive all necessary elements from candidate countries. The IGA would be briefed on further developments. The Director Accessions expressed appreciation to the Government of China for the MOU which made possible the funding of the "China Round Tables" and the Accession Internship Programme.

#### **UPDATE OF ACCESSION FOCAL POINTS IN GVA MISSIONS**

Members were requested to inform the Secretariat of any changes with regard to Accession Focal Points, to ensure smooth exchange of accession-related information.

## ANNEX

EVOLVING CALENDAR OF ACCESSIONS MEETINGS (ECAM)<sup>2</sup>

Date	Working Party	Time	Meeting	Status	Room	Interpretation	
						EN-FR-ES	Own
Tuesday, 23 September 2014	Kazakhstan	15:00 – 18:00	Plurilateral Meeting on SPS (PM)	Convening fax F14-32 dated 16 September 2014 refers	S2	NO	YES
Wednesday, 24 September 2014	Kazakhstan	10:00 – 13:00	Technical Verification Meeting on Goods Schedule with Signatory Members (AM)	Convening fax F14-29 dated 10 Sept 2014 refers	D	NO	TBC
		15:00 – 18:00	Tariff Adjustment: Plurilateral Meeting with Signatory Members (PM)	Convening fax F14-29 dated 10 Sept 2014 refers	D	NO	TBC
Thursday, 25 September 2014	IGA	09:00 – 10:30	8 <sup>th</sup> 2014 Informal Group on Accessions (AM)	Convening fax dated 18 Sept 2014 refers	E	NO	NO
Friday, 26 September 2014	Kazakhstan	10:00 – 13:00	Technical Verification Meeting on Services Schedule with Signatory Members (AM)	Convening Fax dated 26 August 2014 refers	D	NO	YES
		15:00 – 18:00	Informal of the Working Party Meeting (PM)	Convening fax F14-28 dated 10 Sept 2014 refers	W	YES	YES
Friday, 17 October 2014	Seychelles	10:00 – 13:00	7 <sup>th</sup> Working Party Meeting (AM)	Convening Notice pending	D	YES	NO
[4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014]	Liberia		2 <sup>nd</sup> Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014]	Azerbaijan		12 <sup>th</sup> Working Party Meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO
[TBC]	Afghanistan		5 <sup>th</sup> Working Party meeting	Convening Notice pending	TBC	YES	NO

Note:

Enquiries related to this calendar should be addressed to: [accessions@wto.org](mailto:accessions@wto.org)

<sup>2</sup> 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.