Accession to the WTO
INTRODUCTION AND STATE OF PLAY

Josefita Pardo de León
Legal Affairs Officer
Accessions Division
“reciprocal and mutually advantageous arrangements directed to the substantial reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade and to the elimination of discriminatory treatment”

Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement

“[The Members] attach great importance to concluding accession proceedings as quickly as possible. In particular, we are committed to accelerating the accession of LDCs”

Doha Ministerial Declaration, paragraph 9
1. Any State or separate customs territory possessing full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and of the other matters provided for in this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements may accede to this Agreement, on terms to be agreed between it and the WTO. Such accession shall apply to this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements annexed thereto.

2. Decisions on accession shall be taken by the Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial Conference shall approve the agreement on the terms of accession by a two-thirds majority of the Members of the WTO.

3. Accession to a Plurilateral Trade Agreement shall be governed by the provisions of that Agreement.
How does it start?

WTO Director-General

General Council

Working Party on the Accession of...
Accession Negotiations

- Multilateral WTO Rules and Disciplines
- Bilateral Market Access for Goods and Services
Multilateral Track
- fact-finding and terms of entry

- Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime
- Questions & Replies
  - First WP Meeting
- Other documents (SPS/TBT Checklists, etc.), Q&R
- Factual Summary
  - Additional WP Meetings
- Draft Working Party Report

Bilateral Track
- market access

- Initial Market Access Offers on Goods and Services
- Bilateral Negotiations with Interested Members (request-offer approach)
- Bilateral Agreements
- Consolidation of Draft Goods and Services Schedules
Final Steps Towards WTO Accession

**Accession Package**
- Draft Working Party Report
- Draft Goods and Services Schedules
- Draft Protocol of Accession

**Adoption by the Working Party**

**Adoption by General Council / Ministerial Conference**

**Membership**
30 days

**Ratification**
(domestic procedure)
Since 1995, 25 governments acceded to the WTO

* 4 countries (Vanuatu, Samoa, the Russian Federation and Montenegro) completed their accession process in 2012, ratification is pending

* 25 governments are in the process of accession
Article XII Members

- Ecuador 21 January 1996
- Bulgaria 1 December 1996
- Mongolia 29 January 1997
- Panama 6 September 1997
- Kyrgyz Rep. 20 December 1998
- Latvia 10 February 1999
- Estonia 13 November 1999
- Jordan 5 April 2000
- Georgia 14 June 2000
- Albania 8 September 2000
- Oman 9 November 2000
- Croatia 30 November 2000
- Lithuania 31 May 2001
- Moldova 26 July 2001
- China 11 December 2001
- Chinese Taipei 1 January 2002
- Armenia 5 February 2003
- FYROM 4 April 2003
- Nepal 23 April 2004
- Cambodia 13 October 2004
- Saudi Arabia 11 December 2005
- Viet Nam 11 January 2007
- Tonga 27 July 2007
- Ukraine 16 May 2008
- Cape Verde 23 July 2008
Accessions Concluded in 2011 (pending domestic ratification)

* Vanuatu*
* Samoa*
* Russian Federation
* Montenegro
### Acceding Governments

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<tr>
<th>Afghanistan*</th>
<th>Equatorial Guinea*</th>
<th>Sao Tomé &amp; Principe*</th>
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<td>Algeria</td>
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*LDC*
2012 Accession Priorities

* LDCs:
  * Lao PDR
  * Yemen

* Non-LDCs:
  * Kazakhstan
  * Serbia
  * Tajikistan
Lessons learnt

A long and demanding process:
- Kyrgyz Republic < 3 years;
- China >15 years; and
- Russia... since 1993 (perhaps 19 years?)

Progress depends largely on:
- Political will;
- Effective coordination; and
- Technical capacity

Uniqueness and comparability

Few transition periods granted
- Exception: LDCs
- Accompanied by legislative action plans
New Members contribute to the Universality of the WTO

* Percentage of world trade accounted for by WTO Members:
  * 1 January 1995 (128 Members): 87%
  * Today (153 Members): 95%

* Percentage of world GDP accounted for by WTO Members:
  * 1 January 1995 (128 Members): 89%
  * Today (153 Members): 97%
Challenges faced by Acceding Governments

* Domestic coordination challenges

* Special situations:
  * non-residents; conflict-riven; post-conflict...

* Process still perceived as complex, lengthy and burdensome
New Members Strengthen the Multilateral Trading System

* Market Access:
  * All tariff lines bound in both AG and NAMA
  * On average, specific commitments in >100 services sub-sectors

* Rules:
  * Typically, new Members undertake commitments to observe the rules contained in the WTO Agreements from the date of accession
...and the effects on Article XII Members?

- The “whole” (MTS) is only as good as the sum of its “parts” (Members)
- Welfare enhancement (the “Lamy Test”)
  - Accession should make countries better off, not worse of
  - China GDP per capita:
    - 2001: $1,021
    - 2005: $1,452 (30% increase)
  - Cambodia GDP per capita:
    - 2003: $347
    - 2007: $495 (30% increase)
- The accession process as an instrument for domestic policy, legal and institutional reform
Want to know more?

- Dedicated webpage on the Accession of the Russian Federation: http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_russie_e.htm
- Handbook on Accession to the WTO (Cambridge, 2008)
- E-training (accession): https://etraining.wto.org/
- WT/ACC/10/Rev.4: Technical Note on the Accession Process
- WT/ACC/11/Rev.10: Information on Current Accessions
- WT/ACC/1: Procedures for Negotiations under Article XII
- WT/L/508: General Council’s Decision on LDCs’ Accession
- WT/ACC/15: Annual Report by the Director General
Questions?
Thank you!

Email: josefita.pardodeleon@wto.org
Phone: +41 22 739 5642
Fax: +41 22 739 5776