



**REPORT ON**  
**THE ISSUES RELATING TO THE ACTIVITIES**  
**OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION**

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED BY**

**THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE**

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# **C O N T E N T**



	Page
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	3
<b>Section I: Recent developments of the WTO Negotiations</b>	4
<b>Section II: The ICDT actions in the field of the WTO</b>	6
<b>Section III: State of the accession negotiations of OIC Member States to the WTO</b>	10
<b>ANNEXES</b>	20

## BACKGROUND



The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (I.C.D.T) is a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C) in charge of Trade Promotion between Islamic Countries. ICDT was mandated by the Secretary General of the O.I.C and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation for Islamic Countries (COMCEC) to follow up, in collaboration with the Group of the Islamic Development Bank, on the multilateral trade negotiations organised by the World Trade Organisation (W.T.O) and extend support, provide relevant training and technical assistance to the OIC Member States in this field. Within this framework, I.C.D.T submits on a regular basis, progress reports on these negotiations to the COMCEC annual meetings, the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs of the O.I.C and the Council of the Foreign Affairs Ministers (CFM).

Likewise, ICDT produces reports and studies in preparation of the WTO Ministerial Meetings in order to shed light on the positions of Islamic Countries at these meetings and identify a common platform to coordinate their positions.

Besides, the Centre organizes seminars and workshops on the Multilateral Trade Negotiations for the benefit of the representatives of the OIC Member States from both the public and private sectors and on intra-OIC trade negotiations.

- This report is divided into three sections:
  - ✓ Section I: Recent developments of the WTO activities relating to the OIC Member States;
  - ✓ Section II: ICDT actions in the field of the WTO;
  - ✓ Section III: State of the accession negotiations to the WTO of OIC Member States.

## **Section I: Recent developments of the WTO Negotiations**

- The World Trade Organization intensified its preparations for the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC11) which will be held in Buenos Aires 10-13 December 2017. In this regard, around thirty five countries held an informal Mini-Ministerial meeting in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco on 9-10 October 2017, which helped fix a road map towards the maximum chances for success in Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference.
- The Meeting reaffirmed the participating Member States' commitment to an open and equitable multilateral trading system which can adapt to the international economic environment and takes account of interests of WTO members.
- The meeting also affirmed the importance of implementing the results of Nairobi Ministerial Conference and the Bali Ministerial Conference and exploring the means of advancing the negotiations to harness the results of these two conferences for the benefit of Buenos Aires Ministerial conference.
- Many countries emphasised the importance of development as a central theme of discussion. They also underlined the need to integrate developing countries, in particular LDC in the multilateral trading system. While there is divergence regarding the ambitions and priorities, it is important to stay realist in searching for the concrete and equitable results and being open to new approaches to arrive to them.
- Also, the meeting discussed a realistic and equitable package in Buenos Aires which should include advanced concrete issues related to development and clear perspectives concerning the new issues regarding the changing international economic environment.
- The participating countries have also discussed the importance of Special and Differential Treatment as an integral part of all WTO agreements and future multilateral results, in a way to be efficient concerning the implementation plan and allowing developing countries, in particular LDCs, to respond effectively to their development needs.
- The countries have recognized the importance of agriculture which remain at heart of the agenda for many countries. The Case of cotton was underlined by many African countries, especially LDCs.
- The ministers welcomed the negotiating efforts regarding fisheries subsidies and called for marinating the negotiations with a view to making them successful in Buenos Aires.
- The ministers also reaffirmed the importance of Services which contribute strongly to the growth of international economy. The culmination of this negotiation is important for WTO Members.
- Regarding new issues, especially E-commerce, countries discussed how it can assist the economic growth in developing countries and LDCs and achieving structural transformation of their economies. The countries have also acknowledged the digital divide and gaps in infrastructures, technological, juridical and institutional capacities that developing countries face and which represent major constraints for them to reap the benefits of e-commerce. Therefore, countries asked to continue the discussion concerning the proposed regulations of e-commerce to better understand the implications, the challenges and the interests, and making pertinent responses that take into consideration all interest of members.
- The ministers also called for continuing the negotiations in Geneva in a manner that is open, inclusive and transparent for all members with a view to reaching concrete and equitable results. It has been recommended to hold regular meetings at senior officials' level in order ensure the follow up of these recommendations and ensuring the success of Buenos Aires

Ministerial meeting.

- It should be recalled that The World Trade Organization continued its post - 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC10) in Nairobi, Kenya, during the period 15-19 December 2015. The meeting adopted the “Nairobi Package”, a series of six Ministerial Decisions on agriculture, cotton and issues related to least-developed countries. In addition, a Ministerial Declaration outlining the Package and the future work of the WTO was also adopted.
- The Chairman of the Trade Negotiations Committee delivered its report on the status of negotiations on 27 July 2016. In this report, the Chairman informed that there are signs that WTO Members are gradually moving towards a more proposals-driven process. Members have submitted a number of papers. In agriculture, for example, seven papers have been submitted with ideas and queries on a range of issues, including Domestic Support. Also, there is some positive engagement in Services, though less in NAMA. Fisheries subsidies continue to draw much attention. Looking at the Doha Development Agenda issues overall, the Chairman emphasized that if WTO Members want to move forward, so there is a need to significantly deepen the discussions in the months ahead to see if there is any potential for outcomes. And in all of these conversations, there is need to maintain and enhance the focus on development and LDC issues.
- It is also recalled that MC10 has adopted the following decisions:
  - ♦ Work program on small economies.
  - ♦ TRIPS non-violations and situation complaints.
  - ♦ Work program on electronic commerce.
  - ♦ The Transition Period under Article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement for least-developed countries for certain obligations with respect to pharmaceutical products as well as the related Waiver Decision adopted by the General Council concerning least-developed countries’ obligations under Article 70.8 and 70.9 of the TRIPS Agreement.
- With regard to Doha Development Agenda, MC10 has adopted the following decisions:
  - ♦ Special Safeguard Mechanism for Developing Countries in the area of Agriculture.
  - ♦ Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes.
  - ♦ Export Competition in the area of Agriculture.
  - ♦ Cotton.
  - ♦ Preferential Rules of Origin for Least-Developed Countries.
  - ♦ Implementation of Preferential Treatment in Favour of Services and Service Suppliers of Least – Developed Countries and Increasing LDC Participation in Services Trade.
- The MC10 witnessed differences of views among WTO Members regarding the future Doha Development negotiations. While many Members reaffirmed the Doha Development Agenda, and the Declarations and Decisions adopted at Doha and at the Ministerial conferences held since; other Members did not reaffirm the Doha mandates, as they believed new approaches were necessary to achieve meaningful outcomes in the multilateral negotiations. However, Members expressed strong commitment to advance negotiations on the remaining Doha issues, including all the pillars of agriculture, non-agriculture market access, services, development, TRIPS and rules. Ministers also agreed that officials should work to find ways to advance negotiations and requested the WTO Director-General to report regularly to the General Council on these efforts.

## SECTION II

### THE ICDT ACTIONS IN THE FIELD OF WTO ISSUES

ICDT carried out several activities to serve OIC Member States' economic interests with regard to WTO issues. In implementation of COMCEC "WTO – related resolutions", ICDT organized several seminars for the benefit of the OIC Member States, in partnership with IDB Group, WTO, UNCTAD, ITC and WCO, in order to increase OIC Member States' awareness and to develop their capacities in different international trade fields regulated by WTO agreements:

#### **1. Consultative Meeting of the OIC Ministers of Trade, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015:**

ICDT participated in the Consultative Meeting of the OIC Ministers of Trade in Nairobi on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015 organized by the IDB Group on the sidelines of the WTO Ministerial Meeting held on 15-19 December 2015. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Jean-Louis BILLON, Minister of Trade of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. The objective of the meeting was to gather common position of the OIC Member States to the issues of WTO which should be negotiated during the MC10 in Nairobi. More than 30 ministers and delegations attended this Meeting. During the meeting, ICDT presented the current state of negotiations in the WTO and highlighted the relevant issues to be raised by OIC Member countries during the Nairobi Meeting and distributed the ICDT's documents submitted on this occasion.

#### **2. The Outcome of WTO 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference and Accession to WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement", Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, 25 February 2016:**

In order to increase the awareness of OIC Member States of the results and outcome of WTO Tenth Ministerial Conference, ICDT organized a seminar on "**The Outcome of WTO 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference and Accession to WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement", which was held on 25 February 2016 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco.** The seminar highlighted the following results for OIC Member States as realized in Nairobi Ministerial Conference:

- Increase the number of OIC Member States in WTO Membership to 44 countries, which provides strong leverage to OIC Member States to leverage their collective interests in WTO negotiations.
- Strengthen the capacity of OIC Member States to take trade measures aiming at increasing their agriculture exports and ensure food security. This would come as a result of WTO decisions to eliminate agriculture export subsidies, increase competition in global markets and to allow WTO developing countries to pursue public stockholding programs for food security purposes.
- Eliminating tariffs by 2019 on 201 Information Technology products as a result of WTO Plurilateral Agreement on Information Technology, which was concluded by 53 WTO Members.
- Facilitating LDCs exports of goods and services to international markets.
- Increased number of OIC Member States which have signed and ratified WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (As of writing this report, eight OIC Member States out of 68 WTO Member States which have notified their ratification of the agreement).

#### **3. Workshop on the "Administration of RTAs and the prospects of Regional Integration in the OIC Member States", Casablanca, 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.** The meeting was attended by twenty- two OIC Member States.

#### **4. Training Workshop on TPS-OIC and international trade issues for the Ministry of National Economy, Palestine, on 4-5 April 2016, Amman, Jordan.** The workshop was attended by 25 Palestinian participants from public and private sectors.

**5. Working session on the operationalization of Single Window Modalities on the sideline of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum of the OIC TPOs, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016:**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum of the OIC Trade Promotion Organs (TPOs) was organised by the OIC General Secretariat and ICDT in close cooperation of the Ministry of Trade and Investment of KSA in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 23 May 2016.

The Forum was attended by representatives of trade promotion organs from 31 Member States namely: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Uganda and United Arab Emirates. The representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, ICDT, SESRIC, IDB Group (ITFC and ICIEC), ICCIA and the International Trade Center (ITC) and International Islamic Center for Reconciliation and Arbitration (IICRA) also attended the Forum.

Participants recommended the following:

- ✓ To establish National Single Window (SW) and to interoperate them at bilateral and regional levels (e.g. an E-Certificate of Origin at OIC level) aiming at facilitating trade among OIC Member States;
- ✓ To conduct a survey on the state of play of SW in the OIC Countries and to identify best practices to share;
- ✓ To organize regional workshops and seminars to highlight the importance of the Single Window facility for intra-OIC trade as well as to encourage and promote the implementation of required steps for the full implementation of the Single Window facility in the OIC countries.

**6. Regional seminar on “The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Prospects of Activating the OIC Single Window” for the benefit of the member states of the African Countries: Casablanca - kingdom of Morocco, 30 May-01 June 2016.**

***Context:***

Within the framework of the implementation of technical assistance to the OIC Member States on WTO issues, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the Department of Cooperation and Integration of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) organized in collaboration with the Ministry in Charge of Foreign Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco a Regional Seminar on "WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and prospects for operationalization of OIC Single Windows for the benefit of the OIC African Member States" from 30 May to 1 June 2016 in Casablanca, Morocco.

***Objective:***

The objective of this seminar is to sensitize the public and private sectors of OIC Member States of the importance of the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and its impact on the development of foreign trade among Member States on the one hand, and to share experiences and best practices regarding the implementation of national trade facilitation programs on the other, in particular the establishment and the strengthening of national Single Windows of Foreign Trade and the interoperability between those Single Windows.

***Participants:***

The following countries took part in this seminar: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Togo and Tunisia.

The following international organizations also participated namely: the ICDT, the IDB (Department of Cooperation and Integration), the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AAEC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Regional Office of the Economic Commission for Africa (Rabat).

### ***Axes of the Seminar:***

The experts presented the following topics:

- Overview of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement;
- Implementation of the WTO TFA;
- Other regional and international tools for trade facilitation;
- National experiences of the implementation of WTO TFA (Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Egypt, Tunisia, Burkina Faso);
- Creation measures of a National Single Windows (national experience: Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali);
- The role of regional and international organizations in assisting the implementation of national and regional Single Windows;
- The cooperation between the customs authorities in facilitating cross-border procedures.

After the presentations, participants asked questions on the process of ratification of the Protocol of Amendment of the TFA, the notifications of Categories A, B and C, the ways and means to develop the technical assistance projects, the impact of TFA on national economies, those responsible for the implementation of the Agreement, the involvement and support of the industry in the implementation of TFA and the rising awareness at national and regional level.

### ***Recommendations:***

After a fruitful discussion, the participants proposed the following recommendations:

- ***WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement***
  - Organise a meeting of Customs administrations of the OIC countries;
  - Duplicate the organization of regional awareness raising seminars on WTO TFA to accelerate the ratification of its protocol of amendment;
  - Organize a regional sensitization seminar for the benefit of Employer's Federations of OIC countries in order to assist companies in understanding and showing compliance with regulatory and procedural requirements of cross-border business operations;
  - Establish an OIC task force of the National Trade Facilitation Committees to contribute to the development of intra-OIC trade.
- ***Single Window of Foreign Trade:***
  - Implement a program of technical assistance and sharing of experience in the creation of Single Windows between the developed countries of the OIC and other Member States;
  - Encourage countries to establish national single windows with a vision of regional cooperation in collaboration with the OIC institutions, ITC, WCO, AAEC and other development partners (World Bank, ADB, BADEA) and other institutions such as WAEMU, ECOWAS, CEMAC, COMESA... to take into account the requirements arising from the WTO Agreement as well as regulatory barriers in transport and logistics services;
  - Initiate a pilot project of interoperability of national Single Windows with the countries that have already ratified the SPC-OIC Agreement and conduct its extension to a second phase with other Member States;
  - Request from the participating Member States to fill the Single Windows questionnaire and to send it back to ICDT for the preparation of an assessment report in terms of technical assistance requirements.

Preparation of the Survey of OIC Single Window:



- ICDT prepared a draft questionnaire send to SESRIC, UNCTAD and ITC for consideration;
  - The questionnaire was distributed to participants in the seminar on WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and operationalization of OIC Single Window end of May 2016;
  - The questionnaire will be forwarded officially to OIC Member States in due course.
7. **Workshop on the Mechanisms for settlement of Trade and Investment Disputes among the OIC Member States**, 20-21 February 2017, in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. Partner: International Islamic Centre for Reconciliation and Arbitration (IICRA).
  8. **Training Workshop on Trade in Services for OIC Member States**, 22-24 March 2017, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. Partner: DRMC/IDB.
  9. **Workshop on the Preparation of WTO Ministerial Conference 11: An African Perspective**, 17-19 July 2017, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. Partner: DRMC/IDB.

### **SECTION III**

## **THE OIC MEMBER STATES WHOSE ACCESSION TO THE WTO IS IN PROCESS**

The total number of the WTO Member reached 162 countries with the accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during the 10<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference. Currently, 43 WTO Member States are OIC Members, that is to say more than the quarter of the WTO Members. The WTO Member States account for about 97% of the world economy.

The current number of the OIC Member States that have applied for accession to the WTO is 10, these are: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Uzbekistan, Sudan, Syria and Comoros. The current status of WTO accessions is as follows:

- Working Party established for Libya and Syria.
- Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime submitted by Iran, Iraq and Uzbekistan.
- Factual Summary of Points Raised circulated by Sudan.
- On-going bilateral market access negotiations on goods by Algeria, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Sudan and Uzbekistan.
- On-going bilateral market access negotiations on services by Algeria, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Sudan and Uzbekistan.
- Draft Report of the Working Party circulated by Algeria, Azerbaijan and Lebanon.

The activities related to the accession of Comoros, Sudan and Somalia have intensified especially during the second half of 2016. For example:

- the Comorian team has worked intensively, held two Working Party meetings, and last month, concluded several bilateral market access negotiations. And now, they are very focused to conclude their accession in the coming months.
- Sudan started a conversation about its reactivation, again, here in Nairobi on the margins of MC10. Half year later, in July last year, Sudan officially announced the reactivation of its accession process to the entire WTO membership at a meeting of the General Council. This was followed by an intensive work of updating their documentation. This year, Sudan had two Working Party meetings to register concrete progress, and concluded two bilateral market access negotiations so far.
- Somalia is one of the latest applicants to start the accession process in December 2016 after its application letter was first submitted during Nairobi MC10. Somalia is working on the Memorandum on its Foreign Trade Regime, which will be the base document to kick off the accession negotiations.
- Azerbaijan told WTO members at an accession working party meeting on 28 July 2017 that it intended to “concentrate on the bilaterals” as well as implement the legal reforms necessary to bring the domestic trading regime in line with WTO requirements. Azerbaijan had undertaken a number of reforms over the past six months, including adopting 12 “strategic roadmaps” for the development of the country’s economy as well as regulations covering trade facilitation and the improvement of trade and logistic infrastructure. Implementation of the roadmaps by 2020 would serve as a “foundation” towards successful accession to the WTO.

The WTO accessions take place on the interrelated pathways multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral negotiations. Some processes have made significant progress in 2013, while others have not progressed as expected due to various factors, including further negotiations with Members, technical complexities, internal difficulties and choices.

Significant technical work has been undertaken on several accessions. Thus, the combination

of technical assistance and outreach activities of the Secretariat is essential to help Members and acceding governments in their negotiations and better understand the effects and results of accession mean for the future of the Organization. In this regard, the contributions of the Chairmen of working groups were vital. It should be noted that technical assistance benefitted from the financial contribution of the following countries: Australia, Brazil, China, the United States, India and the European Union (EU) and its individual Member States.

➤ **TRANSPARENCY OF THE ACCESSION PROCESS:**

Transparency and predictability of the accession process remain key priorities for Members and the WTO Secretariat. In 2013, measures and initiatives for transparency taken over the last four years have continued to be implemented and strengthened.

Thus, the informal group of accessions (GIA) meet regularly. Consultations focused on the following questions: i) sharing and exchange of information on accessions with Members; ii) Secretariat's reports on technical developments in the accession process; iii) reports from the Chairs of the Working Groups to Members on the results of their visits to the countries; iv) planning of meetings on accession and related activities based on the progressive calendar of meetings on accession proposed by the Secretariat; and v) response to specific concerns raised by Members and acceding governments .

The information on WTO accessions Bulletin aims at providing to acceding governments, the Presidents and Members, a summary report of the meetings of the GIA. It also contains useful information on the operational level to help prepare the meetings and negotiations on accession.

The practice of meetings with various groups of WTO Members has intensified to focus on specific issues and concerns of each group. The overall objective is to report to the Members on activities during the calendar year, for their comments and raise concerns to be taken into account. The Secretariat may meet with the Advisory Group of LDCs, the informal group of developing countries, the Asian Group in developing countries, GRULAC, the African Group and the Arab Group. During these meetings, it informed the group of the status of accessions, reported on its activities, exchanged views on the responsibilities of neighbouring /regional groups, considered the concerns rose by acceding governments and Members, and consulted its interlocutors on technical priorities for accession in 2014.

➤ **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND AWARENESS-RAISING:**

Technical assistance and capacity building related to accession are focused on the training of government officials. They also include awareness-raising activities intended to Members of Parliament, the private sector, university circles, civil society and the media. Technical assistance and capacity building activities include the following: i) national seminars; ii) sessions on the accessions during the advanced trade policy courses, regional courses and introductory courses for LDCs; iii) workshops; iv) technical missions; v) visits by the Chairmen of the working groups; vi) the creation or strengthening of centres of reference of the WTO; vii) online training; viii) dialogue with groups of WTO Members; and ix) participation in conferences.

➤ **TOOLS FOR THE ACCESSION:**

WTO has launched in July 2016 new Accessions Intelligence Portal which provides improved access to information on WTO accessions and many new features, such as direct access to all notified legislation for completed accession. The portal is available at: <https://www.wto.org/accessions>.

Database commitments under the accessions (ACDB): Database on commitments within the accessions (ACDB) was launched in May 2012. It gives access to all the commitments and

related information contained in the reports of the working groups of the accession and accession protocols of 31 Members under Article XII MC (<http://acdb.wto.org>).

### **1. Algeria:**

With an observer status since 1987, Algeria officially submitted to the WTO a report on its foreign trade regime in June 1996. The submission of this report represented the first step in the membership procedure in this organisation.

The working group on the accession of Algeria, which is chaired by M.C Perez Del Castillo (Uruguay), numbers 43 countries.

Since then, some WTO Member States, such as the United States, the EU, Switzerland, Japan and Australia, sent a series of questions to Algeria. The answers were sent to the WTO secretariat and a first meeting of the working group on the accession of Algeria to the WTO was held in Geneva in April 1998.

Algeria held five rounds of multilateral negotiations (April 1998, February 2002, May 2002 then November 2002 and May 2003, in 2004 and 2005) and two rounds of bilateral negotiations in the agricultural, industrial and services sectors (April 2002 and November 2002). The examined subjects are: agriculture, customs system, State trade, transparency and legal system reform and TRIPS.

With respect to bilateral meetings, Algeria has met about ten countries; these are: the United States, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Cuba, Uruguay, Turkey and the Republic of Korea.

Algeria submitted initial offers concerning goods and services in March 2002 and revised offers were distributed on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2005. The revised elements of a draft report of the working group and the latest new facts concerning the legislation were also examined during the meeting of the working group on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the working group in charge of the accession of Algeria to the WTO took place on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 at the headquarters of the WTO.

The agenda items of this meeting dealt with the progress of bilateral negotiations relating to market access, the consideration of the draft report of the working group and the new development of the Algerian legislation.

The working group in charge of the accession of Algeria to the WTO is currently tackling a document entitled "draft report of the working group on the accession of Algeria to the WTO". This document will comprise the main issues that will be discussed at the meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> October 2005.

Besides, on the sidelines of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the working group, bilateral meetings were held during the period going from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2005 with the representatives of some WTO Members, particularly with the United States, Switzerland, New Zealand and Malaysia within the framework of the resumption of talks relating to the market access of commodities and services.

The Bilateral Negotiations in the field of market access are underway on the basis of revised offers concerning goods and services. The multilateral review on the foreign trade regime is underway and a revised draft report of the Working Party was circulated in June 2006.

### **On 17 January 2008, members reviewed the revised draft Working Party report:**

The Working Party report describes Algeria's foreign trade regime and the reforms undertaken in recent years to bring Algeria's legal and institutional framework into compliance with WTO rules. Members also evaluated the progress made in the ongoing bilateral negotiations on market access for goods and services.

Members have acknowledged Algeria's progress in reforming its trade regime in order to be fully compatible with WTO rules. Algeria has passed new legislation on Technical barriers to trade (TBT); sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues; intellectual property (TRIPS); antidumping, safeguards and countervailing measures; pricing policies; customs valuation; importation of pharmaceuticals products; exports of beef, sheep and palm trees.

The Algeria's Working Group revised an offer on specific commitments in services and was circulated in February 2012.

The long march of Algeria for its accession to the WTO is explained also by the will of the Algerian government to lead, first, internal reforms, to successfully upgrade some areas likely to be threatened by competition and to achieve a diversification of its economy. A roadmap to accelerate the negotiation process of Algeria's accession to the WTO was developed and a series of bilateral talks to resolve differences and finalize agreements is planned between March and April in addition to the holding of an informal meeting with the Working Group on the accession of Algeria to the organization, in anticipation of the formal meeting to be held in June 2012.

### **Bilateral negotiations on market access of goods and services:**

Algeria has completed negotiations with Brazil, Uruguay, Cuba, Venezuela and Switzerland. It still needs to conclude negotiations with the EU, Canada, Malaysia, Turkey, the Republic of Korea, Ecuador, the USA, Norway, Australia and Japan.

The tenth meeting of the working Group took place in January 2008.

Additionally, five bilateral agreements were signed by Algeria within the framework of the negotiations process for its accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012 with Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela and Argentine. Negotiations on the conclusion of a similar agreement with the EU, main trading partner of the United States have reached an advanced stage.

Negotiations for the signature with the other WTO Member States are still undergoing and Algeria is on the verge of concluding an agreement with Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand, while talks with Japan, Canada, Malaysia, Turkey and Ukraine are progressing well.

The long progression of Algeria towards its accession to the WTO reflects the will of the Algerian government to conduct, first, internal reforms, successfully upgrade some areas that might be threatened by competition and achieve a diversification of its economy.

The eleventh meeting of the Working Group was held on 5 April 2013 in the presence of the Minister of Trade, Mr. Mustapha Benbada. On this occasion, Algeria introduced for consideration by the working group twelve documents relating to revised offers for goods and services, the revised legislative action plan and proposals for amendments, supplements and updating of the draft report of the group.

Mr. Minister stressed that Algeria is willing to "bring its trade regime into conformity with WTO agreements." However, he wished "the granting of reasonable periods of transition" for some measures, which are not compliant with the agreements.

He also indicated that a program was drawn up under which member countries should send their questions before 10 May 2013 to Algeria, which has pledged to make the answers at the end of June or on 15 July 2013 and propose to hold another round of negotiations in Autumn 2013.

The Algerian delegation met on 2, 3 and 4 April 2013 the delegations of twelve Members of the WTO. These are from Malaysia, Indonesia, Ecuador, Argentina, the United States of America, El Salvador, Canada, Norway, New Zealand, Japan, Australia and Turkey.

Four bilateral agreements with Uruguay, Cuba, Switzerland and Brazil already signed were

deposited at the WTO secretariat, while two other agreements with Venezuela and Argentina are being finalized.

-The Working Party on the Accession of Algeria met on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 in order to take stock of the situation regarding Algeria's negotiations for the accession to the WTO. During this meeting, WTO members expressed satisfaction at the significant progress made by Algeria.

Members' comments focused on quantitative import restrictions, including prohibitions, restrictions on investment, export subsidies, discriminatory application of domestic taxes, the system for recording information on geographic indications, price policies, marketing rights and agricultural policies.

The other issues to be tackled concern industrial policies and subsidies, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and trade related investment measures.

Besides, further to the future consultations among Members, the Algerian government and the WTO Secretariat will decide when to hold the next meeting of the Working Group. Beforehand, Algeria should provide updated information on developments in legislation, respond to the questions of Members and update its Legislative Action Plan, and then, Members should review this information.

## **2. Azerbaijan:**

Azerbaijan's Working Party was established on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1997. Azerbaijan submitted a Memorandum on its Foreign Trade Regime in April 1999. Replies to a first set of questions concerning the aide-memoir were circulated in July 2000 then a second series in December 2001. The first meeting of the working group was held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2002. The last meeting of the working group was held on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2005. Bilateral negotiations on market access are underway on the basis of revised offers concerning goods and services.

A Summary of Points raised -an informal document outlining the discussions in the Working Party- was prepared by the Secretariat and circulated in December 2008. This summary was revised in July 2009.

### **Negotiations on market access:**

Azerbaijan signed an Agreement with Georgia in April 2010. Negotiations are underway with the European Union and with ten WTO's members.

The Working Group held its ninth meeting on 24 February 2012 during which the latest reforms adopted by Azerbaijan to advance its accession to the WTO and bring its trade regime into conformity with WTO rules were discussed. The group also discussed the legislative development and reviewed progress in bilateral negotiations on market access for goods and services.

The latest revision of factual summary of November 2012. The tenth meeting of the Working Group was held on 7 December 2012 and the WTO Members discussed the status of negotiations on market access, the trade regime and legislative reforms for the accession of Azerbaijan to the WTO.

In addition, Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator of Azerbaijan gave on this occasion, an overview of the economic situation of the country and the development of relevant legislation in the context of the WTO. He said that the objective of his government was to diversify and modernize the economy in order to reduce its dependence vis-à-vis the oil and gas sector.

Regarding bilateral negotiations on market access, the Deputy Minister said that Azerbaijan had signed a bilateral agreement with the Kyrgyz Republic in March 2012 and had recently concluded bilateral negotiations with China. Other bilateral negotiations were held with Brazil,

Canada, Korea, the United States, Japan, Norway and the European Union on the sidelines of the meeting of the Working Group.

The representatives of China, the United States, India, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Switzerland, Turkey and the European Union welcomed the contributions presented by Azerbaijan and expressed support for the accession of the country.

During the discussion, members requested to be given accurate details on the economic policies of Azerbaijan, state trading enterprises and privatization policy, prices, investment and competition, the exemptions from VAT and the application of excise duty and on the adoption of the Law on Customs Tariff. They also wished to have information on fees and charges for services rendered supplements, customs valuation, rules of origin, export bans, subsidies for industrial products, export subsidies agricultural products, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, government procurement and intellectual property.

The Secretariat was entrusted with developing the documentation by drawing up a draft report of the Working Group on the factual summary of raised points. Bilateral negotiations on market access are underway with interested Members on the basis of a revised offer concerning goods distributed in September 2013, and a revised offer relating to services, distributed in October 2013. Four Bilateral Agreements were deposited at the WTO Secretariat (United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey). The eleventh meeting of the Working Group took place on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014.

During this meeting, WTO members discussed the trade regime of Azerbaijan on the basis of the draft report of the Working Group. Thus, Members asked Azerbaijan to provide clarifications on tax exemptions, investment incentives, the operation of foreign companies, privatization, technical barriers to trade, subsidies, transit and Intellectual Property.

The twelfth meeting of the Working Group was held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and the Chairman of the Working Group welcomed the steps taken by Azerbaijan to bring its trade regime into conformity with WTO rules and requested the government to accelerate the stages of its accession to the WTO and the members of this group to submit their questions before 15 April 2015.

### **3. Comoros:**

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007, the General Council set up a Working Party in charge of examining the accession application of Comoros to the WTO. It allowed its Chairman to appoint the Chairman of the Working Party in consultation with Members and the representatives of Comoros (Document WT/ACC/COM/1).

The Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime was circulated on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013 (WT/ACC/COM/3). The Chairman of the Working Group was appointed on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013. The first meeting of the Working Group should be held as soon as the Comoros have completed their first round of questions and answers with Members.

### **4. Iraq:**

Iraq made its application for accession to the WTO on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004, under Article XII. A working group chaired by Mr Guillermo Valles Galmez (Uruguay) was established at the meeting of the General Council held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

Iraq has submitted an aide-memoir on its foreign trade system but the working group has not met yet.

For the first time since Iraq's application in 2004, the Working Party met to discuss and examine Iraq's trade legislation and its conformity with the WTO principles.

Iraq met bilaterally with Brazil, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Jordan, Morocco, Norway Oman Taiwan, the EU and Viet Nam. Iraq was invited to submit initial offers to advance their market access negotiations on goods and services.

Iraq will prepare documents on agriculture, services, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary issues and intellectual property, it will also prepare a general legislative plan of action providing members with a state of play of current and future legislation.

Working Party members, on 2 April 2008, supported Iraq's rapid accession to the WTO and argued it would contribute to the country's integration into the world economy. Iraq's Trade Minister, H. E. Dr. Al-Sudani, stated that Iraq was determined to overcome the country's difficult circumstances to move forward on the accession process and added that Iraq's membership would represent a significant addition to the international community.

#### **Review of trade legislation:**

At this stage of the accession, members examine all aspects of Iraq's trade and economic policies to assess their conformity with WTO principles.

Since the 1st Working Party meeting held in May 2007, Iraq has provided members with a legislative action plan which shows the state of play of the ongoing legal reforms. Iraq also provided information on its sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, technical barriers to trade (TBT) and the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) as well as information on its domestic support and export subsidies in agriculture.

#### **Bilateral negotiations:**

Iraq has met with several members on the sidelines of the Working Party. Market access negotiations will start once Iraq tables its initial offers on goods and services.

Iraq submitted its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime in September 2005. The Working Party met for a second time in April 2008 to continue the examination of Iraq's foreign trade regime.

Iraq has provided several documentary contributions requested by the Working Group. It has yet to submit its initial offers on market access for goods and services. The next meeting of the Working Group should be held as soon as Iraq has submitted its initial offers on market access.

#### **5. Iran:**

Iran submitted its application for accession to the WTO to the General Council during its session held on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July 2004 in Geneva (WT/ACC/IRN/1). This application was unanimously adopted by the General Council on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2005. A working group was established at the meeting of the General Council held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

The Aide-memoir on the Foreign Trade Regime was circulated in November 2009. Questions from Members about it were transmitted to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in February 2010. Technical contributions, including responses to Members' questions were distributed in 2011. Before a meeting of the Working Group to be convened, the Chairman of the General Council will consult with Members to appoint a Chairman of the working Group

#### **6. Lebanon:**

Lebanon's Working Party was established on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999. The aide-memoire on the Foreign Trade Regime was circulated in June 2001 and the answers to issues concerning the aide-memoire were circulated in June 2002. The working group met for the first time on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

Multilateral work is proceeding on the basis of a revised draft Working Party Report that was circulated in October 2009. Bilateral market access negotiations are conducted on the basis of revised offers on goods and services. The Seventh meeting of the Working Party was held in October 2009.

The Working Group will hold its meeting upon the provision by the Lebanese Republic of the necessary contributions.

#### **7. Libya:**



Libya deposited an official application for accession to the WTO on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2001 (Doc.WT/ACC/LBY/1). The WTO Members agreed on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2004 to start negotiations with Libya on its membership.

Libya has not submitted yet the aide-memoir on its foreign trade system and the working group has not met yet.

### **8. Sudan:**

The Working Party on the accession of Sudan was established on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1994. Sudan's Memorandum on its Foreign Trade Regime was circulated in January 1999. Replies to a first set of questions concerning the Memorandum were circulated in November 2000 and a second set of questions were put in January 2003. The second meeting of the working group was held in March 2004.

The bilateral negotiations on market access for goods and services are underway, on the basis of the initial offer concerning services and a revised offer concerning goods.

Two bilateral agreements (with Brazil and China) concerning market access have been deposited at the Secretariat. Updated technical contributions are pending, and especially legislative and constitutional updated information following the independence of South Sudan in 2012. The Secretariat keeps regular technical contacts with Sudan to identify areas in which documents and updated information are required. This accession is pending.

### **9. Uzbekistan:**

The Working Party on the accession of Uzbekistan to the WTO was established on 21 December 1994. Uzbekistan submitted its aide-memoir on the Foreign Trade Regime in September 1998 and replies to questions on his aide-memoir were circulated in October 1999. Bilateral market access contacts have been initiated. The Working Party met for the first time on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2002. Uzbekistan has started bilateral negotiations on market access with interested members on the basis of initial offers concerning goods and services submitted in September 2005. The third meeting of the working group took place in October 2005.

### **Conclusion:**

Although the membership of the WTO provides clear benefits, negotiations on accession are a challenge for all acceding governments, especially LDCs. The terms and conditions of the accession impose internal reforms. Acceding LDCs have limited technical and human capacity and financial resources to deal with the complex aspects of the accession to the WTO.

In 2012, the General Council adopted the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on LDCs to further strengthen, streamline and make the 2002 Decision on the accession of least developed countries operational (Guidelines on LDC accession). These recommendations were developed in accordance with the Decision adopted on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2011 at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

The General Council's Decision of 2012 was adopted as an addendum to the 2002 Guidelines on LDC accession. The extension of technical assistance tailored by the WTO Secretariat to acceding LDCs at all stages of the accession process to the WTO remained a priority in 2013. It was made by means of interactions with delegations in Geneva or in capitals.

The Program of China for LDCs and accessions has contributed greatly to strengthening the negotiating capacity of LDCs. So far, seven (7) trainees were trained under this program. In 2013, the WTO Secretariat has continued its dialogue with regional groups in the WTO and the Consultative Group of LDCs.

There are three OIC LDCs, in the process of acceding to the WTO: Afghanistan, Comoros and Sudan. It should be noted that among the 47 LDCs, only 31 are WTO members.

Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing countries have met on 12 September 2012 in Almaty

(Kazakhstan) to discuss ways and means to enhance the commercial potential of these countries and to establish a common position on major current business issues.

The purpose of the meeting organized by the Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Office for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) is devoted to preparing for the Conference year review of the Almaty Programme to be held in 2014.

Developing countries (LLDCs) have no access to land and the sea and are relatively isolated from world markets, so they have to bear transport costs higher than average and low participation in international trade.

The landlocked OIC countries are the following: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date of the setting up of a working group</b>	<b>Chairman of the working group</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June 1987</b>	<b>Argentina</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> July 1997</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Comoros</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> October 2007</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> December 2004</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>
<b>Iran</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> May 2005</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> April 1999</b>	<b>France</b>
<b>Libya</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> July 2004</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Sudan</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> October 1994</b>	<b>Morocco</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> May 2010</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> December 1994</b>	<b>Mexico</b>

**Source: WTO**

### Summary Table of Ongoing Accessions

	Application	Working Party Established	Memorandum	First/Latest* Working Party Meeting	Number of Working Party Meetings *	Goods Offer		Services Offer		Draft Working Party Report **
						initial	latest*	initial	latest*	
<b><u>Algeria</u></b>	<b><u>Jun 1987</u></b>	<b><u>Jun 1987</u></b>	<b><u>July 1996</u></b>	<b><u>April 1998</u> <b><u>March 2014</u></b></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>Feb 2002</u></b>	<b><u>Nov 2013</u></b>	<b><u>Mar 2002</u></b>	<b><u>Oct 2013</u></b>	<b><u>February 2014</u></b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Jun 1997	Jul 1997	Apr 1999	Jun 2002/ <b><u>July 2017</u></b>	<b>12</b>	May 2005	<b>Sept 2013</b>	May 2005	Feb. 2015	<b>Jan 2015</b>
<b>Comoros</b>	Feb 2007	Oct 2007	October 2013	Designation Sept 2013						
<b>Iran</b>	Jul 1996	May 2005	Nov 2009							
<b>Iraq</b>	Sep 2004	Dec 2004	Sept 2005	May 2007/April 2008	2					
<b>Libya</b>	Jan 1999	April 1999	June 2001	Oct 2002/Oct 2009	7	Nov 2003	June 2004	Dec 2003	June 2004	Oct 2009
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	June 2007	Dec 2007	April 2001	July 2002/July 2012	1					
<b>Lebanon</b>	Dec 2004	Feb 2005	March 2005	Oct 2005/June 2013	13	<b>April 2006</b>	Nov 2008	Oct 2006	Nov 2008	<b>Oct 2012</b>
<b>Sudan</b>	Dec 1994	Dec 1994	Oct 1998	Jul 2002/Oct 2005	3	Sept 2005		Sept 2005		

**Note:** \*As of the date of this document. \*\* Most recent Factual Summary (FS), draft Working Party Report or Elements of draft Working Party Report.

## ***ANNEXES***

## LIST OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES, WTO MEMBERS

COUNTRIES	DATE OF ACCESSION
1. Albania	8 September 2000
2. Bahrain	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
3. Bangladesh	13 December 1993
4. Benin	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
5. Brunei	January 1995
6. Burkina Faso	3 June 1995
7. Cameroon	13 December 1995
8. Chad	19 October 1996
9. Côte d'Ivoire	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
10. Djibouti	31 May 1995
11. Egypt	30 June 1995
12. Gabon	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
13. Gambia	23 October 1996
14. Guinea	25 October 1995
15. Guinea-Bissau	31 May 1995
16. Guyana	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
17. Indonesia	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
18. Jordan	11 April 2000
19. Kuwait	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
20. <u>Kazakhstan</u>	<u>30 November 2015</u>
21. Kyrgyzstan	20 December 1998
22. Malaysia	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
23. Maldives	31 May 1995
24. Mali	31 May 1995
25. Morocco	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
26. Mauritania	31 May 1995
27. Mozambique	26 August 1995
28. Niger	13 December 1996
29. Nigeria	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
30. Oman	9 November 2000
31. Pakistan	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
32. Qatar	13 January 1996
33. Saudi Arabia	11 December 2005
34. Senegal	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
35. Sierra Leone	23 July 1995
36. Suriname	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
37. Tajikistan	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2013
38. Togo	31 May 1995
39. Tunisia	29 March 1995
40. Turkey	26 March 1995
41. Uganda	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1995
42. United Arab Emirates	10 April 1996
43. Yemen	26 June 2014
44. <u>Afghanistan</u>	<u>29 July 2016</u>

**LIST OF OIC MEMBER STATES CANDIDATES  
FOR  
ACCESSION TO THE WTO  
(OBSERVERS)**

- 1. Algeria**
2. Azerbaijan
3. Comoros
4. Iran
5. Iraq
6. Lebanon
7. Libya
8. Sudan
9. Syria
10. Uzbekistan

## **LIST OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES, NON MEMBERS OF WTO**

1. Palestine
2. Turkmenistan
3. Somalia