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REPORT ON

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

SUBMITTED BY

**THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF TRADE**

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(COMCEC)**

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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 activities in the field of the WTO;
 - ✓ Section III: Status of accession negotiations to WTO of OIC Member States.

SECTION I:
**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE WTO ACTIVITIES RELATING
TO THE OIC MEMBER STATES**

I) RECENTS DEVELOPMENTS OF WTO

a) Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility

At the request of the ACP group, the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) conducted a half-day workshop on Trade Facilitation notifications on 22 July 2019 at the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

The workshop focused on assisting non-LDC ACP WTO Members to complete outstanding notifications under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) that are required in order to allow developing countries to take advantage of implementation flexibilities. An August 22, 2019 deadline, which is the final deadline for developing countries, relates to the notification of definitive dates for the implementation of provisions of the Agreement which developing country WTO Members have self-designated as requiring technical assistance and capacity building before implementation ("Category C").

The workshop was graciously opened by Her Excellency, Cheryl Spencer, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva and Coordinator of the ACP Group in Geneva.

This workshop followed a similarly-focused retreat conducted for Least Developed Country (LDC) Members in June in Lausanne, Switzerland. And had an agenda which covered the review of Members' TFA implementation to date, notification requirements, deadlines, experience-sharing and was designed specifically to the current status of the Members in attendance.

Concluding with a working group session, participants of the non-LDC ACP workshop completed an action plan of how they would advise their national TF committee in the capital to meet the August 22 deadline. Presenters were from the WTO Secretariat, the Government of Guyana, Summit Alliances International and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Presenters also facilitated the working groups and answered remaining questions on the notification process.

Seventeen delegates attended the workshop. In addition, the event was live-streamed and accessible to capital-based officials in the ACP countries.

This workshop was followed by several scheduled drop-in sessions during which Members received one-on-one advice on their notification situation.

Trade Facilitation Week took place at the WTO from 14 to 18 October 2019. Events were centred around the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee on 15 October and the Committee's annual dedicated session on technical assistance on 16 October.

Building on the success of a similar initiative in 2018, TFA Facility funded government officials with trade facilitation expertise from more than 50 LDC and developing country WTO Members to attend the week.

TFAF invited donors and partners to host sessions or to propose topics for workshops on either side of the Committee meeting. This approach allowed the Geneva-based TF community to benefit from the attendance of the capital-based experts and kept the travelling participants engaged and involved throughout the week. Topics covered by partners ranged from TFA and disaster response, legislative and policy considerations to a UNOHRLLS experts group meeting on improving transit cooperation and trade facilitation. Pacific and island countries also had dedicated sessions covering TFA implementation issues specific to them, including automation

and the facilitation of Food and Agriculture trade. The UK's Department for International Development and the EU each held sessions on monitoring and evaluation and the REX registered exporter system for LDCs respectively.

Sessions organized by TFA Facility reflected an increasing focus on implementation of the Agreement following a successful push to meet notification deadlines over the summer. A special emphasis was placed on sessions designed to bring together development partners and Members seeking assistance to implement provisions of the Agreement designated under Category C – requiring technical assistance to implement.

b) Notifications and ratifications

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) concluded in Bali in December 2013 came into force on 22 February 2017, following its ratification by two-thirds of WTO members. The last countries that have ratified the EFA are: Guinea, Burundi, Cape Verde, Tanzania, Vanuatu, Tunisia and Colombia (10 August 2020), bringing the increase to 153 the total number of ratifications out of the 164 WTO members.

Among the Member States that have ratified the EFA, 41 out of 153: Malaysia, Niger, Togo, Pakistan, Guyana, Côte d'Ivoire, Brunei, Mali, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Albania, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Senegal, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, Chad Jordan; Qatar, Gambia, Indonesia, Djibouti, Benin, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Morocco, Egypt, Tajikistan, Guinea and Tunisia.

About 121 notified TFA Category A including 40 OIC countries such as : Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Bahrain, Brunei, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroun, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, The Gambia, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kirghizstan, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Mali, Mauritania, Malaysia, Maldives, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Suriname, Togo, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and United Arab Uni.

In addition, **104** countries reported **Category B and 94 Category C** of the Agreement according to WTO data **from 12 May 2020**. 36 OIC Member States have notified **Category B** such as Albania, Chad, Guyana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Brunei, Gambia, Mali, Malaysia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Senegal, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates, Benin, Guinea and Uganda.

33 OIC countries have notified **Category C of the AFE Agreement**, they are: Albania, Chad, Guyana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mauritania, Senegal, Suriname and Tajikistan, Benin, Guinea, Tunisia and Uganda. We recall that 44 OIC Member States are WTO members with Afghanistan, which acceded to it on 29 July 2016. Eleven OIC Member States are in the process of joining the WTO.

c) ACCESSION TO 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.

Important technical work has been undertaken on several accessions. Thus, the combination of the Secretariat's technical assistance and outreach activities is essential to help Members and governments enter their negotiations and to better understand what the effects and outcomes of accessions mean for the future of the Organization. In this regard, the contributions of the Chairs of the working groups have been vital. It should be noted that this technical assistance has seen the financial contribution of the following countries: Australia, Brazil, China, the United States, India and the European Union (EU) and its various Member States.

The Secretariat organized a five-day training course on Goods Schedules for acceding governments from 18 to 22 November 2019. Twenty officials from 12 acceding governments (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Ethiopia, Lebanese Republic, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uzbekistan) attended the week-long course, together with officials from three WTO Members. The advanced course provided in-depth training on accession related aspects of trade in goods, including scheduling techniques, discourses on commitments and concessions in goods market access as well as experience sharing sessions where participants could interact with WTO Members involved in accession negotiations. In addition, former negotiators from four recently acceded Members - Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Montenegro, and Yemen shared their experiences in the market access negotiations and offered advice to the acceding governments. The thematic focus will be "Economic Transformation through WTO Membership and AfCFTA Implementation". The target participants are government officials responsible for WTO accession and private sector representatives from African acceding governments.

The practice of meetings with various groups of members at the WTO has intensified, in order to focus on the specific issues and concerns of each group. The overall objective is to report to Members on the activities of the calendar year, to gather their observations and to identify concerns to be addressed.

The Secretariat met with the LDC Advisory Group, the Informal Group of Developing Countries, the Asian Group of Developing Countries, GRULAC, the African Group and the Arab Group. During these meetings, he briefed the groups on the status of accessions, reported on its activities, exchanged views on the responsibilities of neighbors/regional groups, discussed the concerns raised by accessing governments and members, and consulted with its interlocutors on technical accession priorities for 2014.

d) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND AWARENESS

Technical assistance and capacity building related to accession are focused on training government officials. They also include outreach activities for parliamentarians, the private sector, academia, civil society and the media.

Technical Assistance and capacity building activities were provided as follows:

- (i) National seminars;
- (ii) Sessions on accessions during advanced trade policy courses, regional courses and introductory courses for LDCs;
- (iii) Workshops;
- (iv) Technical missions;

- (v) Visits by working group chairs;
- (vi) Creating or strengthening WTO reference centers;
- (vii) Online training;
- (viii) Dialogue with WTO member groups;
- (ix) And attending conferences.

Between 9 and 12 October 2019, WTO Members held a meeting of the Trade Facilitation Committee and additional workshops on EFA-related topics. Thus, these workshops are open to all WTO members and observers during which the EFA donation program is launched on 9 October 2019. Additional closed sessions will be held for LDCs and Pacific Island countries.

Eleven OIC Member States are in the process of joining the **WTO**. While there are clear benefits to membership, accession negotiations are a challenge for all acceding governments, including LDCs. The terms and conditions of accession require domestic reforms. Accessing LDCs have limited technical and human capacity and financial resources to deal with the complexities of WTO accession.

Providing technical assistance to accessing governments, particularly to developing and least developed countries (LDCs) accessing, is a key priority for the OIC and the WTO. Technical assistance, capacity building and accession awareness activities are organized, with the WTO Secretariat, the IDB and the ICDT responding to specific requests from an acceding government. These activities are carried out in close coordination with the Accession Division and the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (IFCT).

e) TOOLS FOR ACCESSIONS

In July 2016, the WTO launched a new Intelligent Membership Portal that improves access to wto membership information as well as many new features, such as direct access to all laws notified for completed memberships. The portal is available at:

<https://www.wto.org/accessions>. Membership Commitments Database (ACDB): The Membership Commitments Database was launched in May 2012. It provides access to all of the commitments and related information contained in the membership working group reports and membership protocols of the 31 Members under Article XII MC (<http://acdb.wto.org>). In 2018, the database has been updated to include the accession protocols of all Article XII Members and the commitments contained in them.

The Second Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions of the Great Horn of Africa was held in Djibouti from 3 to 6 December 2018. It was organized by the WTO Secretariat in partnership with the Djiboutian government and the International Trade Centre (ITC) and focused on "Trade in the Service of Peace through WTO accession". The Dialogue attracted more than 80 participants, including ministers, senior officials and private sector representatives from LDC governments accessing the OIC in the region such as Comoros, Somalia and Sudan. Other participants from Member States include Afghanistan, Yemen and Djibouti, development partners (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank) and international experts,

including ministers, senior officials and private sector representatives from LDC governments accessing the OIC in the region such as Comoros, Somalia and Sudan. Other participants from Member States include Afghanistan, Yemen and Djibouti, development partners (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank) and international experts.

The 3rd Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for Africa, Addis Ababa, 12 – 14 February 2020
The Secretariat will organize the Third Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions for Africa from 12 to 14 February 2020. The event will take place in Addis Ababa, at the United Nations Conference Centre. Partners for this activity are the African Union Commission (AUC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the World Bank and the Government of Ethiopia. The thematic focus will be "Economic Transformation through WTO Membership and AfCFTA Implementation". The target participants are government officials responsible for WTO accession and private sector representatives from African acceding governments.

on 29 June – 3 July 2020, the Secretariat delivered the first virtual Accessions Week. The week-long activity comprised ten 90-minute webinars of lectures, training, dialogues and roundtables, covering topical issues in accession.

The Accessions Week started with a High-Level Opening session focused on the present and future value of WTO membership, with the participation of WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff, Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhanova of Kazakhstan, former Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession, Ms. Luisa Santos, Deputy Director-General of Business Europe, and Professor Monika Mrazova from the University of Geneva.

This was followed by sessions providing an overview of accessions and bilateral market access negotiations on goods. The rest of the Week had three dialogues focused on Eurasia, Arab region and LDCs and four roundtables of Chief Negotiators, Working Party Chairpersons, development partners and the private sector. In total, the Accessions Week benefited from knowledge, experience and insights from 42 experts who have been directly involved and associated with accessions.

A total of 857 participants from acceding governments, WTO members, IGOs, academia and the private sector, were connected to various webinars, injecting questions and comments and actively engaged with panellists. Overall, the feedback was very positive.

At the invitation of the Group, WTO Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff shared his views on the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the WTO and on accessions. He welcomed the active engagement by several acceding governments despite the pandemic crisis and highlighted the importance of trade integration during this crisis.

On 9 June 2020, the Informal Group of Acceding Governments (IGAG) held a virtual meeting at the level of Heads of Delegation, chaired by Ambassador Yury Ambrazevich of Belarus. The meeting was attended by 35 officials from 17 acceding governments, including a Minister and four Chief Negotiators connected from their capitals.

Nine acceding governments intervened to share their views on the impact of COVID 19, globally and nationally, including on their respective accessions. Notwithstanding the current crisis, acceding governments reiterated their full commitment and readiness to move forward in their accession processes. On 21 July 2020, the IGAG, jointly with the Group of Article XII Members coordinated by Panama, met with H.E. Ms. Amina Mohamed (Kenya) and H.E. Mr. Tudor Ulianovschi (Moldova) – candidates for the post of the next WTO Director-General. A significant part of the discussion was devoted to WTO accessions and the possible role of the Director-General in facilitating accessions.

II – TRADE IN SERVICES:

On 9 April 2018, WTO members appointed Ambassador Aitzhanova, Chair of the Services Trade Negotiations Committee, who stressed the importance of the services sector to all countries, regardless of their level of development, and the dynamism of the sector. It announced that it would consult with Members to facilitate future discussions.

Services negotiators expressed their willingness to resume negotiations on:

- (i) Better access to service and service provider markets for other WTO members;
- (ii) the development of new disciplines to make domestic regulation more objective and transparent and to ensure that domestic regulation is not unnecessarily cumbersome;
- (iii) the services aspects of e-commerce (the electronic provision of services).

Some Member States have indicated that this could help pave the way for the potential outcomes of the Services at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference in 2017.

SECTION II

THE ICDT ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF WTO ISSUES

ICDT carried out several activities to serve OIC Member States' economic interests with regard to WTO issues.

1. The High Level OIC Expert Meeting on “Investment Obstacles in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities”, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, 24 – 25 January 2018

In implementation of the agreement between H.E. the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and H.E. President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, during the OIC 44th Council of Foreign Ministers held in Abidjan in July 2017, to organize an OIC Conference on Obstacles and Facilitation of Investment in Africa, the Islamic Center for Development of Trade (ICDT) took the initiative of organizing a High Level OIC Expert Meeting on “Investment Obstacles in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities” which was held on 24-25 January 2018 in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco.

The main objectives of this Meeting are to share international, regional and national perspectives on main obstacles, to propose better solutions to Investment in Africa in one hand and on the other hand to prepare the draft Conference Declaration and the draft OIC Investment Guidelines that will be presented for the consideration of the 2018 OIC Africa Investment Conference in Abidjan, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire.

ICDT organized the meeting in partnership with the Investment Division of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The following OIC Member States and OIC institutions participated in the meeting: Kingdom of Morocco, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Turkey, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Department of Legal Affairs of the OIC General Secretariat.

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), The Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), University of Geneva, and University of East Anglia (UK).

Experts have prepared two draft documents to be considered as final documents to be submitted to the 2018 OIC Investment Conference in Africa; “Draft OIC Guiding Principles for Investment Policymaking” and “Draft Declaration of the Conference”.

The “Draft OIC Guiding Principles for Investment Policymaking” and “Draft Declaration” shall be endorsed by the OIC General Secretariat before their submission to the Forthcoming OIC Investment Conference in Africa” and to the OIC Member States. The said documents are not binding and remain of indicative nature as long as they are not officially adopted by the relevant decision-making body at the OIC.

2. Workshop on coordination mechanism between OIC Member States vis-à-vis WTO issues, 19-20 October 2018, Geneva, Switzerland

Referring to the Resolution N° 52 of the Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC held during the period 20-23 November 2017 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey which has requested ICDT and IsDB Group to submit a working paper for the consideration of the next COMCEC meeting about Practical options to increase OIC Ministers of Trade Coordination vis-à-vis recent developments in the negotiations at the WTO and to formulate positions on priority issues for OIC Countries currently being proposed in the WTO, ICDT and IDB in collaboration with OIC Permanent Representative in Geneva, organized a Workshop on this theme in Geneva, Switzerland on 19-20 October 2018.

The objectives of this workshop are to review the draft study and gather the observations and comments made by Member States (MS) in one hand and on the other hand to elaborate practical recommendations to better enhance common coordination mechanisms between Member States in WTO matters.

The Workshop was attended by the following representatives of the OIC Permanent Missions in Geneva: Niger, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Sudan, Palestine, Pakistan, Oman, Albania, Bangladesh, Mali, Djibouti, Senegal, Gabon, Turkey, Maldives, Brunei, Pakistan, Jordan, Comoros, Yemen and Kazakhstan.

ICDT, the OIC Mission in Geneva and IsDB Group facilitated this meeting.

3. Panel on Obstacles and Solutions to Investment in Africa, 23rd October 2018, Geneva, Switzerland

Within the framework of the instructions of H.E. The Secretary General of OIC, OIC/UN Cooperation and TISC Integrated Project on Investment, UNCTAD, ICDT, ICIEC, SESRIC, organised in collaboration with the OIC Permanent Mission in Geneva a workshop on «Obstacles and Solutions to Investment in Africa » on 23rd October 2018.

The workshop was chaired by H.E. Amb. Nassima BAGHLI with the participation of Mrs Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD and representatives of ICDT, ICIEC, SESRIC, Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) and the Inoks Capital.

More than 200 participants representing plus 50 countries attended this workshop.

The main objectives of this Meeting are on one hand to share international, regional and national perspectives on main obstacles and propose better solutions for Investment in Africa in the one hand and to prepare the draft Declaration of the Conference and the draft OIC Guiding Principles for Investment Policymaking.

The representatives from ICDT, ICIEC and SESRIC presented the activities of their institutions in the field of investment promotion, obstacles and practical recommendations to invest in Africa.

4. Workshop on Post-WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference (MC11) for the OIC Member States, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 19-20 November 2018.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Resolution of Thirty-Third Session of the COMCEC, held during the period 20-23 November 2017 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, which has called upon the IDB and ICDT to continue providing technical assistance to the OIC Member States on WTO related issues and to enhance their efforts in sensitizing the Member States to the impact of WTO trade negotiations on their economies.

The resolution also requested the IDB and ICDT to synergize and coordinate their efforts to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of the OIC Member States, so as to facilitate their full integration into the Multilateral Trading System in a fair and equitable manner. In this regard, ICDT and IDB Department of Strategy and Cooperation organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy of the State of the United Arab Emirates a Workshop on Post-WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference (MC11) for the OIC Member States in Dubai on 19-20 November 2018.

This Workshop is organised to discuss important topics including the state of play of WTO negotiations, the Ministerial Decisions by MC11, the Status of OIC Member States' accession to WTO and future OIC Coordination for WTO issues and to share views of the OIC Countries' Representatives in the OIC priorities of negotiations within WTO and issues to be discussed for the upcoming Ministerial Conference.

The following Member countries participated in this Workshop: Egypt, Oman, Suriname, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Sudan, Malaysia, Pakistan and United Arab Emirates.

ICDT, IDB, South Centre and Third World Network experts also attended the workshop.

5. Workshop on Post-WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference (MC11) for the OIC African Member States, Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, 26-27 June 2019:

Within the framework of the implementation of the Resolution of Thirty-Third Session of the Standing Committee on Commercial and Economic Cooperation among OIC Countries (COMCEC), held during the period 20-23 November 2017 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, which has called upon the IsDB and ICDT to continue providing technical assistance to the OIC Member States on WTO related issues and to enhance their efforts in sensitizing the Member States to the impact of WTO trade negotiations on their economies. ICDT and IsDB Country Strategy and Cooperation organised in collaboration with the Secretary of State in Charge of Foreign Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco on Post-WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference (MC11) for the OIC African Member States in Casablanca on 26-27 June 2019.

This Workshop is organised to discuss important topics including the state of play of WTO negotiations, the Ministerial Decisions by MC11, WTO reforms, the Status of OIC Member States' accession to WTO and future OIC Coordination for WTO issues and to share views of the OIC Countries Representatives in the OIC priorities of negotiations within WTO and to tackle MC12 issues to be held in Nur-Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan on 8-11 June 2020.

The following countries participated in this Workshop: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Morocco.

6. Workshop on "Current WTO Negotiations for the OIC Member States Embassies in Geneva", Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 November 2019

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), the Country Strategy and Cooperation Department of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) organized in collaboration of the Permanent Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva a Workshop on "Current WTO Negotiations for the OIC Member States Embassies in Geneva", Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 November 2019.

The objectives of this workshop were to discuss important topics including current negotiations and their impact on OIC Member Countries trade on some important issues such as Agriculture, Fisheries subsidies, Electronic Commerce, Trade in Services, Investment Facilitation for Development, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Trade & Women's Economic Empowerment, WTO Reform and Coordination for WTO Issue. This event contributed to provide greater awareness to the OIC Permanent Missions participants on recent developments on WTO Negotiations in order to prepare them to raise issues for their delegations to the upcoming Ministerial Conference (MC12) to be held in Nur-Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan on 8-11 June 2020. More than 20 Countries and 8 Regional and International Organizations participated in this event.

SECTION III

STATUS OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS TO WTO

OF OIC MEMBER STATES

The total number of the WTO Member reached 164 countries with the accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference. Currently, 44 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 11, these are: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Uzbekistan, Sudan, Syria, Comoros and Somalia.

During the meeting on WTO accessions, Mr. Wolff Alan, Deputy Director General of the Informal Group of Governments acceding to the WTO held on 25th April, had supported these countries to meet regularly and share their experience with a view to furthering their accession negotiations and inquiring about WTO reforms.

At the individual level, for many candidates - especially small economies - the main net positive contribution to the Multilateral Trading System will come from the domestic reform processes that drive accession negotiations.

At the systemic level, the accession process also contributes to the evolution of the international trading system and, in other words, to the development of rules by the WTO. In total, over 1 500 paragraphs containing commitments have been incorporated into the legal framework of the WTO through 36 accessions concluded under Article XII since 1995.

Each of the new accession protocols was adopted with the aim of strengthening multilateral disciplines and represented a constituent element of the Multilateral Trading System. In many cases, this has resulted in a new benchmark for WTO rules. Transparency is an example, with more than 250 specific commitments in this single area.

Accession commitments also provide an opportunity to stimulate discussions on rule-making at the multilateral level.

Members have consistently pursued a set of trade objectives in the accession negotiations on various aspects of the current rules, paving the way for the development of new approaches.

Accessions have always been a step ahead of the multilateral trade negotiations, particularly in the areas of trade facilitation, tariff quota disciplines and export subsidies.

Do Members have the opportunity to look into the experience of WTO accessions as an additional source of inspiration for the ongoing debate on the reform of the Organization?

In the area of notifications and transparency, many Members under Article XII have made significant contributions through extensive notifications, sometimes in areas where the results of the original Members were weak, or in areas where there were no multilateral disciplines yet (such as the reporting of privatization programs).

Although multilateral disciplines have in many respects bridged their gap with the results of accession negotiations through the entry into force of the TFA, some reference levels of transparency established through accessions have not been met (eg publication requirements).

The fact that acceding and candidate Members incur greater commitments than some existing Members is in their interests because it allows for effective reforms and integration into the

global trading system, but it also benefits the system by paving the way forward.

In addition, the accessions took into account the need for differentiation among Members in terms of specific flexibilities tailored to explicitly expressed needs. The Legislative Action Plan provided a simple and effective tool for defining these needs in a structured way.

In this area, and in others, dialogue requires investment from all parts. Members under Article XII and the Observer Governments that are currently aspiring to join are key stakeholders in the ongoing debate, and their voices should be heard.

Joint initiatives on e-commerce, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, investment facilitation, domestic regulation of services and women's participation in trade are of great interest to small and medium-sized developing economies, which are the bulk of the acceding countries. Many Members under Article XII are already participating in these discussions.

It should be noted that these initiatives are opened not only to all WTO Members but also to observers.

The current status of WTO accessions is as follows:

- Working Party established for Libya, Syria and Somalia.
- 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.
- Draft Report of the Working group 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 bilateral” 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.

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 18th 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 25th February 2005.

The 9th meeting of the working group in charge of the accession of Algeria to the WTO took place on October 21st 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 21st October 2005.

Besides, on the side lines of the 9th meeting of the working group, bilateral meetings were held during the period going from 18th to 20th 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 28th 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 31st 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.

On May 8, 2018, the WTO General Council confirmed the appointment of Ambassador José LuíS Cancela Gómez, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the WTO, as the new Chairman of the Working Group.

At the invitation of the Government of Algeria, Ambassador José Luis Cancela (Uruguay), Chairman of the Working Party, visited Algiers at the end of November 2018. During his 3-day visit, he met with the Minister of Commerce, the National Committee on WTO Accession, the Chamber of Commerce, the Intellectual Property Office and a think tank.

2. Azerbaijan:

Azerbaijan's Working Party was established on 16th 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 7th June 2002. The last meeting of the working group was held on June 30th 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 side-lines 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 21st 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 6th 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.

At the invitation of the Government of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Walter Werner (Germany), Chairman of the Working Party, visited Baku on 27 and 28 June 2018. Accompanied by members of the WTO Secretariat, he held a series of high-level meetings, including with: (i) HE Mr. Shahin Mustafayev, Minister of the Economy and Chairman of the Interministerial Commission in charge of preparing Azerbaijan's accession to the WTO; (ii) HE Mr. Rufat Mammadov, newly appointed Deputy Minister of the Economy; (iii) HE Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator on WTO Accession; and (iv) Mr. Ziyad Samadzadeh, Chairman of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) Economic Policy Committee.

The meetings confirmed the broad support for Azerbaijan's accession to the WTO. The Accession is seen as a fundamental element in unlocking Azerbaijan's economic potential, especially given its role as a logistical and transit hub linking Asian and European markets. The meetings also helped to better define Azerbaijan's policy priorities in terms of policies, the domestic dynamics of the accession process and some of the difficulties related to this process. Azerbaijan is currently carefully examining the measures to be taken within the framework of the accession process. In addition, Azerbaijan is also preparing updated negotiating documents for the Working group, including its replies to questions from Members during the last meeting held in July 2017.

Azerbaijan was urged on 28 July 2018 to step up bilateral talks with WTO Members on market access commitments for goods and services in order to accelerate its efforts to secure WTO membership.

The chair of the WTO's working party on the accession of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Walter Werner (Germany), concluded a meeting of the working party by calling on Azerbaijan to

“proactively engage and advance market access negotiations” with members and to focus in particular on bilateral market access talks, “whose progress, in my view, has fallen behind other areas of the accession negotiations”.

H.E. Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Azerbaijan’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator, said his government intended to “concentrate on the bilateral”, which he acknowledged as “one of the weak parts of our accession process”, as well as implement the legal reforms necessary to bring its domestic trading regime in line with WTO requirements.

The Deputy Minister noted that 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. He noted that implementation of the roadmaps by 2020 would serve as a “foundation” towards successful accession to the WTO.

A delegation from Baku, led by H.E. Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, was in Geneva from 17 to 20 December 2018. The main objective of the visit was to advance Azerbaijan's bilateral market access negotiations. On the margins of the bilateral meetings, the delegation met with Ambassador Walter Werner (Germany), Chairman of the Working Party, and the Accessions Division to exchange views on the state of play in the accession process and possible next steps.

A delegation from Baku visited Geneva in the last week of June 2019. The main objective of the visit was to hold bilateral meetings with selected Members on domestic support for agriculture, on the margins of the meeting of the Committee on Agriculture (25- 26 June). Moreover, the delegation met with Ambassador Walter Werner, Chairman of the Working Party, and the Secretariat, to provide updates on the technical work being done in the capital.

During the week of 16 December 2019, a delegation from Baku, led by Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, visited Geneva. The main objective of the visit was to advance bilateral market access negotiations with Members. The delegation also met with the Secretariat to exchange views on the preparation of an updated draft Report of the Working Party, in light of the inputs received from Baku in October 2019, as well as on the timing of the next meeting of the Working Party. The Secretariat has been invited to attend a workshop on WTO accession in Baku on 21 January 2020.

The Secretariat continues technical exchanges with Baku to update the draft Report of the Working Party, which will be the basis for discussion at the next meeting of the Working Party. Once the draft Report is finalised, the Chairperson of the Working Party, Ambassador Walter Werner (Germany), together with the Secretariat, will explore specific next steps. On 4th June 2020, a virtual meeting was organised between the Secretariat and the Azeri side.

3. Comoros:

On 9th 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 Comorian accession working group was established on 9 October 2007. The working group is at its third meeting in October 2017. The working group is chaired by Ambassador Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA (Peru).

The Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime was circulated on 25th October 2013 (WT/ACC/COM/3). The Chairman of the Working Group was appointed on 18th 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.

The 4th meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for 28 March 2018. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the draft report of the Working Group and other documents recently distributed by the Comoros, including responses to Members' questions, a revised Legislative Action Plan, other revised Action Plans in several specific areas and copies of the legislative texts.

At the Bilateral level, Comoros has so far concluded three bilateral market access agreements. With regard to the remaining negotiations, the country hopes to conclude them before the next meeting of the Working Group.

The official goal of the Comoros is to finalize negotiations for accession in 2018.

Mr. Said Salime, Chief Technical Negotiator for WTO accession, said that following the last meeting of the Working Group, held in March 2018, work was in progress to update the negotiating documents and prepare responses to Members' questions. The team also ensured a follow-up concerning bilateral contacts within the framework of the negotiations on market access.

Ambassador Assoumani Youssouf Mondoha, Permanent Representative of the Union of the Comoros to the African Union, reported that two customs-related, WTO compliant, reform measures had been successfully adopted. The next step in the accession process is the submission by Comoros of replies to questions, which will be the basis for the Secretariat to update the draft Report for the next meeting of the Working Party.

Mr. Houmed Msaidié has been appointed to lead the Ministry of Economy, Investments and Energy, which is responsible for WTO accession. Preparation is underway for the next meeting of the Working Party, which is provisionally envisaged to take place in the fourth quarter of the year.

Newly appointed Minister of Economy, Investments and Energy, Mr. Houmed M'Saidié, visited Geneva to meet with WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on 10 September 2019. Minister M'Saidié, who is also the Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, reiterated his Government's commitment to conclude the accession process by the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12). Referring to a letter received from the Chairman of the Working Party, Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru), the Minister noted that the legislative actions identified by the Chairman will be addressed in the near future. More specifically, he mentioned the expected elimination of "other duties and charges", the adoption of a copyright law, the finalization of a new draft law on external trade, and the drafting of an amendment to the Customs Code. DG Azevêdo stressed the importance of Comoros adopting the relevant WTO-related legislation on a priority basis, while making progress on technical work, including the signing of all remaining bilateral market access agreements. The Comoros hopes to hold the next meeting of the Working Party in December, following the circulation of all necessary inputs in the coming weeks. These inputs include the replies to questions raised by Members, a Legislative Action Plan, issue-specific Action Plans, and a questionnaire on state-trading.

On 2nd December 2019, the Secretariat participated in a high-level event-Conférence des partenaires au développement de l'Union des Comores), jointly organized by the Government of Comoros and the World Bank in Paris and delivered a statement on the relevance of WTO Accession to Comoros' strategic development plan. On the margins of the conference, the Secretariat met with key Comorian government officials including: Mr. Houmed M'Saidié, Minister of Economy, Investments and Energy, in charge of Economic Integration, Tourism, Crafts and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession; Mr. Said Chayhane, Minister of Finance; Mr. Souef Mohamed El Amine, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Djounaid Soilihi, State Secretary for

the Civil Service; and, Mr. Kamalidine Souef, Director General of the Customs Office. They provided reassurances of the Government's commitment to undertake necessary actions to finalize the accession process in 2020.

In preparation for the 5th Working Party meeting, Moroni circulated the following documents: (i) a revised questionnaire on State Trading; (ii) a legislation notice; (iii) a revised Legislative Action Plan; (iv) additional questions and replies; and (v) sector specific action plans. In addition, the Secretariat prepared a revised draft Report of the Working Party, which was also circulated to the Working Party. The Working Party Chairperson, Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru) proposed 14 September 2020 to organise this meeting.

4. Iraq:

Iraq made its application for accession to the WTO on 30th 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 13th 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.

Iraq circulated its Aide-memoire on the Foreign Trade Regime to the Working Group on 9th February 2018. This document is an updated version of the Aide-memoire previously circulated in September 2005 and reports on developments in Iraq since the second meeting of the Working Group held in April 2008.

Members are asked to comment on the Aide Memoire around 9th March 2018.

Iraq is in regular contact with the Secretariat and continues to work on updating other contributions for negotiations, including offers on market access for goods and services, the legislative action plan and the explanatory charts on agriculture, which will be distributed to the Working Group in the coming months.

On 25-26 July, the WTO and the World Bank conducted a Joint Workshop on WTO Accession for Iraqi government officials in Beirut, Lebanon. The main objectives of the workshop were to take stock of accession related developments in Iraq since the Informal Meeting of the Working Party held in November 2017, and to identify the next steps in the process, as well as Iraq's accession-specific technical assistance needs. The delegation of Iraq, led by Mr. Adel Al Masoodi, Director-General of Foreign Economic Relations Department at the Ministry of Trade, reported on recent trade related policy and legislative developments in Iraq, as well as on the status of work on outstanding accession documentation, including replies to Members' questions on the Memorandum of the Foreign Trade Regime circulated in February 2018, market access offers and other negotiating inputs. On the second day of the workshop, the Iraqi delegation was joined by officials from the Ministry of Economy and Trade of Lebanon and by Mr. Adel Al Ghaberi (UN-ESCWA), who used to be part of Yemen's accession team, for a roundtable discussion on the benefits and challenges of acceding to the WTO. In terms of next steps, Iraq plans to submit the necessary negotiating inputs during the fourth quarter of 2019, so that the Working Party could formally resume in early 2020. It was also agreed that a High-Level Conference on WTO Accession would be held in Baghdad in November, bringing together relevant domestic stakeholders and international partners supporting Iraq's reconstruction efforts.

The Working Party Chairperson, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), who is currently based in New York, visited Geneva on the week of 7 October 2019. He met with Ms. Mayada Abdulhadi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq to the WTO to discuss the state of play of Iraq's accession and the High-Level Conference on WTO Accession in Baghdad, jointly organized with the World Bank, aimed at relaunching Iraq's accession process, following the receipt of negotiating inputs.

On 23 July 2020, the Chairperson of the Working Party, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), held an initial contact with Iraq's newly appointed Minister of Trade, Dr. Alaa Ahmed Hassan Al-Jibouri. They discussed how to resume the accession process, building on the outcomes from the workshop that the World Bank and the Secretariat had organised in Beirut in July 2019 for Iraq's accession team.

5. Iran:

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

On 17th December 2019, a delegation from Tehran, comprising of 9 officials from the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited the WTO. This visit was part of the participation in the EU-Iran Trade Development Project being implemented with the ITC. The Accessions Division delivered a presentation on WTO accessions and engaged in discussions on various topical issues with the delegation.

6. Lebanon:

Lebanon's Working Party was established on 14th 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 14th, 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.

On 25 July 2019, the Accessions Director met with Minister of Economy and Trade Mansour Bteish and his trade team in Beirut to exchange views on Lebanon's accession process. Minister Bteish, who was appointed in February 2019, expressed his openness to the accession process, which would take account of the sensitivities of the Lebanese economy. In turn, the Accessions Director expressed the Secretariat's readiness to assist Lebanon in its reactivation efforts, including with the preparation of negotiating inputs.

7. Libya:

Libya deposited an official application for accession to the WTO on 25th November 2001 (Doc.WT/ACC/LBY/1). The WTO Members agreed on 27th 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 25th 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.

The Working Group held its fourth meeting in July 2017. In preparation for the next meeting of

the Working Group, Sudan circulated revised offers on market access for goods and services, a consultation document and copies of legislation.

Sudan has signed bilateral agreements on market access with Japan and Nigeria, respectively, on 11th April and 19th April 2018. The total number of bilateral market access agreements concluded by Sudan is now increased to six. On 22nd July 2018, Sudan nominated Dr. Mohamed Khair Al-Zubair as the National Negotiator for the accession of this country to the WTO.

H.E. Mr. Musa Mohamed Karama, Minister of Industry and Trade, stressed that trade played a key role in fostering peace and stability, and in particular, the accession to the rule-based multilateral trading system was considered as a catalyst for Government's efforts to undertake necessary economic reforms to promote the rule of law and good governance.

Following the Regional Dialogue, the Secretariat undertook a technical mission to Khartoum on 8-13 December 2018. The objective of the mission was to collect information to update the Factual Summary of Points Raised so as to reflect the trade policy developments of 2018. During the mission, the Secretariat met with Minister Karama and the Technical Committee, which included representatives of the line-ministries involved in the accession process. The agreed next steps at the end of the mission included, inter alia, the circulation of the updated Factual Summary and other negotiating inputs in January 2019.

On the margins of the Eighth China Round Table, Dr Yassin Eisa Mohamed, Secretary-General of the National Secretariat for Sudan's Accession to the WTO, met with Mr. Katsuro Nagai (Japan), Chairperson of the Working Party. Dr. Yassin conveyed the invitation of Mr. Madani Abbas Madani, Minister of Industry and Trade of Sudan, to the Chairperson to visit Khartoum in January 2020. The purpose of this visit would be to meet with officials of the new Government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to discuss steps for an early resumption.

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 17th 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.

On 26 July 2018, the OIC General Council confirmed Ambassador Ji-ah Paik (Republic of Korea) as Chairman of the Working Group for the Accession of Uzbekistan to the WTO.

On 17 December 2018, Mr. Badriddin Abidov was appointed as Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Chief Negotiator for Uzbekistan's accession to the WTO. Earlier December, Mr. Abidov visited Geneva and met with Ambassador PAIK Ji-ah (Korea), Chairperson of the Working Party; Ambassador Alan Wm. Wolff, WTO Deputy Director-General; the Accessions Division; and several Members. The Secretariat discussed with Mr. Abidov the next steps for the reactivation of Uzbekistan's accession process, including the submission of the MFTR and other accession documentations, and the Chairperson's visit.

On 4-5 July, Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade and Chief Negotiator for Uzbekistan's WTO Accession was in Geneva to attend the Aid for Trade Global Review 2019. In the context of a meeting with the Accessions Division, the Deputy Minister reported on the state of preparation of the accession documentation necessary for the resumption of the Working Party. He reported that the Inter-Agency Commission on WTO Accession and the eight thematic technical working groups established thereunder were meeting on a regular basis to advance the preparation of the documentation. In addition, the

Government was undertaking a series of activities aimed at raising awareness about the WTO, including with parliamentarians and private sector representatives. On 5 July, Deputy Minister Abidov spoke at the 2nd Forum on WTO Accessions and met with international partners that have been providing accession-related technical assistance to Uzbekistan. He expressed appreciation for the support received by Uzbekistan and announced that the Government was developing a matrix of its accession needs and the support provided, with a view to ensuring effective "matchmaking". On 18 July, the Secretariat conducted a National Workshop on the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) in Tashkent. The objective of the training was to familiarize the members of the Inter-Agency Commission on WTO Accession with key concepts and principles of the WTO TBT Agreement. The preparation of a TBT Checklist was also discussed at the workshop. On 25 July, the Secretariat circulated Uzbekistan's Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR) - an updated version of the 1998 memorandum. This is the first document submitted by the Government of Uzbekistan since the Working Party last met in October 2005. Members were invited to submit questions on the Memorandum by end of August. Uzbekistan plans to submit shortly the annexes to the MFTR and other accession documents with a view to holding the fourth Meeting of the Working Party as soon as possible.

Following the circulation of the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (an updated version of the 1998 MFTR) on 25 July, Uzbekistan has received questions from 5 Members. On 5 September, Uzbekistan submitted 5 additional annexes to the MFTR. Uzbekistan is currently working on the replies to the questions and other negotiating inputs, such as the Legislative Action Plan, the Agriculture Supporting Tables, the various checklists and questionnaires, as well as the market access offers. The Government aims to formally resume the Working Party process by the end of the year. The Working Party last met in 2005. The Secretariat delivered a training activity on trade in services in Tashkent, on 11-12 September. Uzbekistan has requested additional technical assistance on the TRIPS Agreement.

On the margins of the Eighth China Round Table, Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade and Chief Negotiator for WTO accession, informed the Secretariat that Tashkent was working to finalise the remaining documents for circulation to the Working Party in early 2020. He expressed Uzbekistan's desire to officially resume the Working Party process in the spring of 2020.

On 16 July 2020, the bilateral market access negotiations between Uzbekistan and WTO, the Secretariat was organised a day-long online training for Uzbekistan's negotiating team. Over 60 government officials, including the Chief Negotiator and several deputy ministers, participated in the training which consisted of lectures on goods and services schedules and an experience-sharing round table with former accession chief negotiators from recently acceded Members. Since 20 July, Uzbekistan started bilateral market access negotiations, through virtual platforms.

10. Somalia:

Somalia's Working Party was established on 7 December 2016.

The delegation of Somalia, led by Chief Negotiator Mrs. Maryan Hassan, met on 26 July 2018 with Members, Partners and the Accessions Division of the WTO. Issues addressed included the country's preparedness and the technical and institutional support it needs to complete its accession process.

H.E. Mr. Dahir Adan Abdullah, State Minister for Commerce and Industry, noted that his Government was currently finalizing the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR). Moreover, Somalia had been undertaking reforms, such as, enacting laws on trade licensing, intellectual property rights, investment and government procurement. The importance of

technical assistance for building capacity was stressed.

Following the circulation of Somalia's Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime in early May, a total of 176 questions were received from six Members and have been transmitted to Mogadishu. Currently, Somalia is preparing its replies to these questions, which will be the basis for holding the first Working Party meeting, in addition to the Memorandum.

Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff, on behalf of the Chair of the General Council, continues with the process of securing a Working Party Chairperson, as the deadline for nominations is being extended until early September 2020.

11. Syria:

The Syrian Arab Republic's Working Party was established on 4 May 2010. The Working Party has not yet met.

Expression of interest of Turkmenistan:

On 2-4 July, a high-level delegation from Ashgabat visited the WTO to attend the Aid for Trade Global Review 2019. The delegation was led by Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy Ezizgeldi Annamammedov, and included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations, who were accompanied by Ambassador Atageldi Haljanov, Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations in Geneva. At his meeting with WTO Deputy Director General Alan Wm. Wolff, the Deputy Minister conveyed Turkmenistan's interest in applying for WTO Membership. He also invited the WTO to participate in the First Caspian Economic Forum, scheduled to take place on 12 August, in Avaza, Turkmenistan. He requested that the WTO co-organize with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a national seminar on WTO accession on the margins of the Forum, for members of the Governmental Commission on WTO Accession, which has been tasked with making recommendations on Turkmenistan's application for WTO accession. The Accessions Division also delivered a presentation to the delegation of Turkmenistan on the WTO accession process, which was followed by an interactive session of questions and answers on various aspects of accession, including the benefits of WTO membership.

On 30 July, the Secretariat held a virtual meeting with Mr Vepa Hajiyevev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Government Commission on WTO Accession. The meeting discussed various activities which Turkmenistan could participate in the WTO, such as attendance in formal meetings and technical assistance and training activities organised by the Secretariat.

Conclusion:

WTO membership provides clear benefits, accession negotiations pose a challenge for all acceding governments, especially LDCs. The terms and conditions of accession impose internal reforms. Acceding LDCs have limited technical and human capacity and financial resources to deal with the complexities of WTO accession. ICDT and IsDB organise every year capacity building programs to assist OIC Countries in the field of raising awareness on trade and investment negotiations and technical assistance for acceding countries.

Providing technical assistance to the governments of the acceding countries, is a key priority of OIC and WTO. Technical assistance, capacity building and awareness-raising activities related to accessions are organized by the Accessions Division.

In this regard, twenty-nine officials from 15 governments in the process of acceding to the WTO participated in a Seminar on WTO Accessions Rules, which took place in Geneva from February 4th to 15th 2019. The event was the first WTO Secretariat activity to focus on WTO accession rules.

The main objective of the seminar was to give participants in-depth information on WTO legal disciplines at issue in Working Party reports on the accession process. The aim was also to enhance

awareness of the content of commitment paragraphs in accession reports and how they relate to the relevant legal disciplines.

During the two-week training course, participants had the opportunity to draw on the experience of experts from divisions across the WTO regarding specific areas of WTO rules. Participants also heard from highly experienced negotiators for WTO members – both original members active in accessions and members who have acceded to the WTO in more recent years. In addition, the seminar provided a platform for experience-sharing among the participants, who are all currently directly involved in their countries' accession negotiations.

Moreover, there are serious risks in the present era, but it offers even greater opportunities, unprecedented in recent years. To maintain its relevance, the WTO must accept the metamorphosis it is currently going through as being the "new norm".

Members can either adapt to change and seek to direct it to their collective advantage, or ignore it and risk losing relevance to the WTO.

ANNEXES

Table 1: Dates for the setting up of the OIC Observer Working Groups at the WTO

Country	Date of the setting up of a working group	Chairman of the working group
Algeria	June 17th 1987	Uruguay
Azerbaijan	July 16th 1997	Germany
Comoros	October 9th 2007	Peru
Iraq	December 13th 2004	Morocco
Iran	May 26th 2005	-
Lebanon	April 14th 1999	France
Libya	July 27th 2004	Spain
Sudan	October 25th 1994	Japan
Syria	May 4th 2010	-
Uzbekistan	December 21st 1994	Korea
Somalia	December 7th 2016	

Source: WTO, March 2020

Table 2: 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 **	Review of foreign trade regime ongoing on basis of a Draft Report of the Working Party
						initial	latest*	initial	latest*		
Algeria	<u>Jun 1987</u>	<u>Jun 1987</u>	<u>July 1996</u>	<u>April 1998</u> <u>March 2014</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Feb 2002</u>	<u>Nov 2013</u>	<u>Mar 2002</u>	<u>Oct 2013</u>	<u>February 2014</u>	✓
Azerbaijan	Jun 1997	Jul 1997	Apr 1999	June 2002/ <u>July 2017</u>	<u>14</u>	May 2005	Sept 2013	May 2005	Feb. 2015	Jan 2015	✓
Comoros	Feb 2007	Oct 2007	October 2013	Designation Sept 2013 March 2018	4	Oct. 2016		Oct. 2016			✓
Iran	Jul 1996	May 2005	Nov 2009								
Iraq	Sep 2004	Dec 2004	Sept 2005	May 2007/April 2008	2						
Libya	Jan 1999	April 1999	June 2001	Oct 2002/Oct 2009	7	Nov 2003	June 2004	Dec 2003	June 2004	Oct 2009	
Uzbekistan	June 2007	Dec 2007	April 2001	July 2002/July 2012	3						
Lebanon	Dec 2004	Feb 2005	March 2005	Oct 2005/Oct. 2009	7	April 2006	Nov 2008	Oct 2006	Nov 2008	Oct 2012	✓
Sudan	Dec 1994	Dec 1994	Oct 1998	Jul 2002/July 2017	4	Sept 2005		Sept 2005			
Syria	Oct. 2001	May 2010									
Somalia	Dec 2015	Dec 2016									

Note: *As of the date of this document. ** Most recent Factual Summary (FS), draft Working Party Report or Elements of draft Working Party Report, WTO, March 2020.

**Table 3:
LIST OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES, WTO MEMBERS**

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

**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
11. Somalia

LIST OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES, NON MEMBERS OF WTO

1. Palestine
2. Turkmenistan (expression of interest on July 2019)