eighth China round table on wto accessions

*Provisional title:*

ACCESSIONS AND WTO REFORM: ON THE ROAD TO MC12

Moscow, Russian Federation

[4 – 6 December 2019 (2+1 days)][[1]](#footnote-1)

**DRAFT PROGRAMME**

The Eighth China Round Table is funded by the Government of China, hosted by the Government of Russian Federation, and organized by the WTO Secretariat, as part of the agreed activities under the China-WTO MOU.[[2]](#footnote-2)

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Background

*This programme for the Eighth China Round Table and documents circulated under the China's LDCs and Accessions Programme are designed wholly and exclusively for technical assistance and capacity building purposes, under the WTO Secretariat's own responsibility. It is without prejudice to the positions, rights and obligations of Members under the WTO.*

Since 2012, the China Round Table (CRT) has served a platform for stakeholders' dialogue on WTO accessions, with the aim of sustaining discussions on the integration of new members in the rules-based multilateral trading system. To date, seven Round Tables have been hosted in three continents: CRT-01 in Beijing, China (May 2012); CRT-02 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR (October 2013); CRT-03 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan (June 2015); CRT-04 in Nairobi, Kenya (December 2015); CRT-05 in Siem Reap, Cambodia (March 2017); CRT-06 in Buenos Aires, Argentina (December 2017); and CRT-07 in Astana, Kazakhstan (September 2018). These Round Tables have provided a forum for experience sharing on best practices on WTO accession and post-accession, and for exploring how WTO accessions could strengthen the multilateral trading system.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Eighth China Round Table (CRT-08), held on [4-6 December 2019], is hosted by the Russian Federation as a recently acceded Member,[[4]](#footnote-4) and focuses on "The Accessions and WTO Reform: on the Road to MC12".

Objectives

As the global economy is undergoing change at an unprecedented pace and the multilateral trading system has recently come under pressure, efforts are being made to update the WTO, to enable it to deal with new challenges. A policy debate is underway on how to improve and adapt the rules and operation of the multilateral trading system: whether by expanding the scope of the issues covered by the WTO, or by addressing the perceived deficiencies without prejudice to the core values of the Organization.

Following the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) in Buenos Aires in December 2017, there have been a number of initiatives taken by Members to improve the functioning of the WTO. G20 Leaders at their Summit in December 2018 called for the need for "necessary reforms" of the WTO, while recognizing the important contribution of the multilateral trading system. In Geneva, a number of initiatives and proposals have been tabled by individual or groups of WTO Members, covering a wide range of issues, including transparency, notifications, differentiation, work of the WTO regular bodies and the dispute settlement system.

In parallel, groups of like-minded Members are deepening their engagement on the Joint Initiatives, which were first launched at MC11, to deliver progress on so-called new issues. These include E-Commerce; Investment Facilitation; Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs); and Women's Economic Empowerment and, more recently, Domestic Regulation in Services. The efforts of the participants are aimed to make the multilateral trading system more responsive to the evolving needs of the 21st Global Economy.

Now, Members have begun the preparation for the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12). Hosted by one of the most recently acceded Members, Kazakhstan,[[5]](#footnote-5) it will be the first Ministerial gathering to be held at the heart of Eurasia. WTO accessions, through the results achieved in Article XII negotiations to date, have important contributions to make. By undertaking commitments in support of their ambitious accession-related domestic reforms, Article XII Members have ensured that the multilateral trading system moves forward from the levels of commitments of original Members. With 36 Article XII Members, which account for over one-fifth of the WTO Membership, and with a further 22 economies in the accession queue, it is inevitable that the results of accession negotiations will continue to inform discussions on the future of the multilateral trading system and will accompany the evolution of the rules and operation of the WTO.

Hosted in Moscow, the Eighth China Round Table will provide a timely context for a dialogue on WTO Reform, with a focus on the contributions of WTO accessions. The China Round Table is also aimed to serve as a forum for the preparation for MC12, especially for Acceding Governments, which plan their first ministerial gathering in Nur-Sultan. The specific objectives of the Round Table are:

(i) To exchange views on the contributions of WTO Accessions to the WTO Reform;

(ii) To discuss the implications of regional integration on the multilateral trading system; and,

(iii) To provide a platform for Members and acceding governments to exchange experiences and lessons, with a view to advancing accessions and preparing for MC12.

# PROGRAMME

The programme of the Eighth China Round Table is structured into the following sessions:

* Session 1: WTO Accessions and the WTO Reform;
* Session 2: WTO Accessions and Joint Initiatives;
* Session 3: WTO Accessions: state of Play and the MC12 deliverables;
* Session 4: Regional Integration and WTO Accessions; and,
* Session 5: Round Table on Preparation for MC12.

The five sessions are spread across 2 days. To enable a lively exchange during the China Round Table, all participants are invited to actively participate in the discussions and be ready to fill one or more designated roles, such as that of a panellist, a commentator, or a moderator.

The Round Table is followed by a Special Session for WTO Acceding Governments,[[6]](#footnote-6) on 6 December 2019.

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| **Wednesday, 4 December 2019** | **Thursday, 5 December 2019** | **Friday, 6 December 2019** |
| High-Level Opening Ceremony | **Session 4:**  Regional Integration and WTO Accessions | **Round Table** of Acceding Governments  *(for acceding governments only)* |
| **Session 1:**  WTO Accessions and WTO Reform |
| *Coffee break* | *Coffee break* | *Coffee break* |
| **Session 2:**  WTO Accessions and Joint Initiatives | **Session 4:**  Regional Integration and WTO Accessions (cont'd) | **Round Table** of Acceding Governments  *(for acceding governments only)* |
| *Lunch* | *Lunch* | *Lunch* |
| **Session 3:**  State of play on WTO Accessions | **Session 5:**  Round Table on Preparation for MC12  (moderated by Kazakhstan) | Cultural programme |
| *Coffee break* | *Coffee break* |
| **Session 3:**  State of play on WTO Accessions (cont'd) | Closing session |
| **Reception** | **Cultural programme** |  |

# Programme

Programme

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| **[Wednesday, 4 December 2019]** | |
| **09:00 – 09:30** | **Registration** |
| **HIGH-LEVEL OPENING CEREMONY** | |
| **09:30 – 10:00**  *(The panellists are invited to make 10-min statements)* | ***Moderator:*** Mr Alan Wm. Wolff, Deputy Director-General, WTO  ***Panellists:***   * Mr Roberto Azevedo, Director-General, WTO - TBC * Mr. Maxim Oreshkin, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation - TBC * *XXX, [China] - TBC* |
| **10:00 – 10:10** | ***Group photograph*** |
| **Session 1: WTO Accessions and the WTO Reform**  As the global economy is undergoing unprecedented change and the multilateral trading system has come under pressure, a policy debate is underway on how to improve and adapt the rules and operation of the WTO. As a source of update and strengthening of the WTO rules through their accession-specific commitments, Article XII Members and WTO acceding governments have a role to play in this agenda. The session will focus on the role and contributions of completed and ongoing WTO accessions in these discussions and the possible way forward. | |
| **10:10 – 11:40**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Moderator:*** *TBA*  ***Keynote speaker***: Mr Alan Wm. Wolff, Deputy Director-General, WTO  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **11:40 – 12:00** | ***Coffee break*** |
| **Session 2: WTO Accessions and Joint Initiatives**  Since the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires (MC11), a number of WTO Members have been deepening their engagement on Joint Initiatives to advance talks on the issues E-Commerce; Investment Facilitation; Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs); Women's Economic Empowerment and, more recently, Domestic Regulation in Services. These efforts are aimed to make the multilateral trading system more responsive to the evolving needs of the global economy in the 21st century. Many Article XII Members are participating in these discussions, and acceding governments are demonstrating interest. This session will facilitate discussions on these subjects. | |
| **12:00 – 13:30**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Moderator:*** *TBA*  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **13:30 – 14:30** | ***Lunch*** |
| **SESSION 3: WTO Accessions State of Play**  Part 1 of the session will focus on the state of play on the MC12 accession deliverables: five most advanced accession processes which are envisaged for conclusion before or at the Ministerial. It will provide for an exchange of views on their roadmaps, negotiating achievements and challenges, as well as possible ways to facilitate and expedite conclusion, to meet the MC12 target. Part 2 of the session will focus on the rest of ongoing accession negotiations and will provide an opportunity for an exchange of experiences in concluded and ongoing WTO accession processes, to update best practices. | |
| **14:30 – 16:00**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Part 1: MC12 deliverables***  ***Moderator:*** *TBA*   * **Overview of MC12 accession deliverables – State of play**   Ms Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO  ***Panelists:***   * Comoros * The Bahamas * Belarus * Bosnia and Herzegovina * Serbia   ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **16:00 – 16:30** | ***Coffee break*** |
| **16:30 – 18:00**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Part 2: State of play in ongoing accessions and experience sharing***  ***Moderator:*** *TBA*  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **18:00** | **Reception / Dinner hosted by the Government of the Russian Federation** |

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| **[Thursday, 5 December 2019]** | |
| **SESSION 4: Regional integration and WTO Accessions**  Regional integration efforts have systemic implications on WTO Accessions, and *vice versa*. The session will explore such implications and experiences in completed and ongoing accessions. Part 1 of the session will focus on the experience and lessons learned from WTO accession and membership of the member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (created in 2010 as the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation), which was the first trading bloc established by non-members of the WTO while all three of its members were in process of WTO Accession. Part 2 of the session will be devoted to discussions on regional trade integration processes around the world, and the experiences of WTO acceding governments. | |
| **10:00 – 11:30**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Moderator:*** Mr Alan Wm. Wolff, Deputy Director-General, WTO  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **11:30 – 12:00** | ***Coffee break*** |
| **12:00 – 13:30**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Moderator:*** *TBA*  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **13:30 – 14:30** | ***Lunch Break*** |
| **SESSION 5: Round Table on Preparation for MC12**  The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) is to be held in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, in June 2020. Ahead of the Ministerial, the session will provide a timely opportunity to discuss specific proposals of WTO acceding governments on their role and possible contributions to the outcome of the MC12, including organization of the first Ministerial meeting of WTO acceding governments, building on the discussions under way in the Informal Group of Acceding Governments (IGAG). | |
| **14:30 – 16:00**  *(Panellists are invited to make a 10-min statements, followed by 5-min interventions by commentators)* | ***Moderator:*** Representative of Kazakhstan **-** *TBC*  ***Panelists:*** *TBA*  ***Commentators:*** *TBA*  *Followed by open discussion* |
| **16:00 – 16:30** | ***Coffee break*** |
| **CLOSING SESSION** | |
| **16:00 – 17:00**  *(Format TBD)* | ***Moderator:*** *TBC*   * Closing remarks by Ambassador Alan Wm. WOLFF, Deputy Director-General, WTO * Remarks by *[XXX],* Russian Federation * Remarks by *[XXX],* China * **Report on the Outcome of the Eighth China Round Table**  *[XXX],* Russian Federation |
| **18:00** | **Cultural event** |

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| **[Friday, 6 December2019]** | |
| **Round Table for WTO Acceding Governments[[7]](#footnote-7)** | |
| **10:00 – 11:00**  *(Format TBD)* | *TBA* |
| **11:00 – 11:30** | *Coffee break* |
| **11:30 – 13:00**  *(Format TBD)* | *TBA* |
| **13:00 – 14:30** | ***Lunch*** |
| **15:00 – 18:00** | **Excursion / Cultural programme** |

# Participants

**Acceding Governments**

1. Algeria
2. Andorra
3. Azerbaijan
4. Bahamas
5. Belarus
6. Bhutan
7. Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Comoros
9. Equatorial Guinea
10. Ethiopia
11. Iran
12. Iraq
13. Lebanese Republic
14. Libya
15. Sao Tomé and Principe
16. Serbia
17. Somalia
18. South Sudan
19. Sudan
20. Syrian Arab Republic
21. Timor-Leste
22. Uzbekistan

**Article XII Members**

1. Afghanistan
2. Armenia
3. Bulgaria
4. China
5. Kazakhstan
6. Kyrgyz Republic
7. Montenegro
8. Panama
9. Russian Federation
10. Tajikistan
11. Ukraine

**Members**

1. Canada
2. European Union
3. Japan
4. Korea
5. Nigeria
6. United States

**Working Party Chairpersons**

1. Chairperson of the Accession Working Party of Comoros - Ambassador Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia (Peru)
2. Chairperson of the Accession Working Party of the Bahamas - Ambassador Andrew Staines (United Kingdom)
3. Chairperson of the Accession Working Party of Belarus - Ambassador Kemal Madenoğlu (Turkey)
4. Chairperson of the Accession Working Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Ambassador Atanas Paparizov (Bulgaria)
5. Chairperson of the Accession Working Party of Serbia - Ambassador Marie-Claire Swärd Capra (Sweden)

## International Organisations and partners

1. Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)
2. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
3. World Bank (WB)

## Others

1. *Turkmenistan - TBC*

**Background Information**

1. Accession Network Directory;
2. Director-General's 2018 Annual Report on Accessions.

**ROUND TABLE FOCAL POINTS**

**Government of China**

1. *TBA*

2.

**Government of the Russian Federation**

1. *TBA*

**WTO Accessions Division**

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1. The 2-day Round Table is followed by a Special Session for WTO Acceding Governments, on 6 December 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In July 2011, the Government of the People's Republic of China signed the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WTO on the China LDCs' and Accessions Programme ("The China Programme"), which has thereafter been extended on a yearly basis. The China Programme finances the WTO Accessions Internship Programme and the annual Accession Round Table process, designed to build capacity and technical skills in trade policy, including on accession negotiations, for least-developed and developing countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The thematic focuses of the first seven China Round Tables were: "WTO Accession Best Practice" (CRT-01); "Future of the Multilateral Trading System: Perspectives of LDCS and Article XII Members" (CRT-02); "Post Accession: Maximizing the Benefits of WTO Membership and Global Economic Integration" (CRT-03); "Domestic Reforms for Competitiveness and Deeper Trade Integration in the Global Economy: African Perspectives on the Future of the Trading System" (CRT-04); "Best Practices on the Accessions of Least developed countries to the WTO" (CRT-05); "Strengthening the Rules-based Multilateral Trading System and Building a Network to Promote Accessions" (CRT-06); and "Eurasian Perspectives on the Future of the Multilateral Trading System: Accessions and the Evolution of WTO Rules" (CRT-07). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Russian Federation became the 156th Member of the WTO on 22 August 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Kazakhstan became the 162nd Member of the WTO on 30 November 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For WTO acceding governments only. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For WTO acceding governments only. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)