

10TH CHINA ROUND TABLE

10 Years of Capacity-Building under the China Programme

Reflections on LDC Accessions

Geneva, Switzerland

28 and 29 November 2021

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1 BACKGROUND

This year marks the 10th anniversary of China's Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and Accessions Programme (the 'China Programme'). On 14 July 2011, the Government of China and the World Trade Organization signed a memorandum of understanding establishing the China Programme aiming to strengthen LDC's participation in the WTO and assisting acceding governments to join the WTO through five main pillars: (i) China WTO Accessions Internship Programme; (ii) Annual China Round Tables on WTO Accessions; (iii) increasing participation of LDCs in WTO meetings; (iv) South-South Dialogue on LDCs in WTO meetings; (v) LDCs' Trade Policy Review follow-up workshops.

Since its establishment, the China Programme demonstrated its unique value through targeted assistance to acceding LDCs. This group of LDCs is often faced with unique sets of challenges requiring dedicated support and capacity-building to undertake the necessary reforms required to join the WTO. In total, nine WTO Members have acceded as LDCs pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO¹. Currently, eight LDCs are in the process of WTO accession.² Technical assistance and capacity-building under the China Programme especially through pillar I (WTO Accessions Internship Programme) and pillar II (Annual China Round Tables on WTO Accessions) have facilitated and advanced many of these accession negotiations.

Beyond WTO Accessions, the China Programme provided targeted support to LDCs by (i) funding the participation of LDCs coordinators in meetings related to Aid for Trade, as well as the participation of LDC Delegations in selected WTO meetings through pillar III; (ii) funding High-Level Annual Retreats with LDCs to review the evolving pattern of South-South cooperation on trade to strengthen coordination among LDCs in the context of concluding multilateral negotiations through pillar IV; and (iii) funding the participation of experts from the WTO Secretariat in workshops hosted by LDCs that are subject to a Trade Policy Review through pillar V.

Today, LDCs' challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout. A recent comprehensive study undertaken by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy³ indicated that while the COVID-19 pandemic spread less severely and rapidly in LDCs than the rest of the world, the economic fallout may be more devastating due to various factors including disruptions in global value chains; a global fall in foreign direct investment and remittances; and a decline in international tourism, among others. Added to this are the existing conflict-fragility risks of many acceding LDCs. Half of the current acceding governments are currently considered fragile and conflict affected countries (Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan and Timor-Leste). Going forward, deeper efforts should be geared towards prioritizing enhanced support for the integration of LDCs in the multilateral trading system through WTO accession.

2 THE 10TH CHINA ROUND TABLE

For 10 years, the China Programme has set a strong foundation for targeted support on LDC accessions. China Round Tables have provided a valuable platform for acceding governments, particularly acceding LDCs to build capacity through experience-sharing and sustaining discussions on the contributions of WTO accessions to the multilateral trading system. To date, nine 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,

¹ Article XII Members that acceded to the WTO as LDCs were: Afghanistan (2016), Cabo Verde (2008), Cambodia (2004), Lao PDR (2013), Liberia (2016), Nepal (2004), Samoa (2012), Vanuatu (2012), and Yemen (2014). Cabo Verde and Samoa graduated from LDC status in 2008 and 2014, respectively.

² Bhutan, Comoros, Ethiopia, Sao Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Timor-Leste.

³ https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP_Comprehensive_Study_2021.pdf



Argentina (December 2017); CRT-07 in Astana, Kazakhstan (September 2018); CRT-08 in Moscow, Russian Federation (December 2019); and CRT-09 in Geneva, Switzerland (December 2020).

The 10th China Round Table will provide a timely occasion to celebrate the 10 years anniversary of the China Programme, reflect on its impact on LDC accessions and define the future directions of the Programme. It will take place on 28 and 29 November on the margins of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held from 30 November to 3 December 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland.

3 PROGRAMME

DAY 1	
EXPERT SESSION	
<p>In this session, experts will examine the impacts of WTO accession on the nine LDCs that have joined the Organization pursuant to Article XII of the Marrakech Agreement. It will provide a unique opportunity for the commissioned researchers to present the results of their studies reviewing the economic performance of the nine LDCs after they joined the WTO and assess the impacts of accession reforms on their business environments as well as their interactions with regional and global markets. This will be followed by a Round Table discussion among representatives of Article XII and acceding LDCs on WTO accession and a review of the pillars of the China Programme.</p>	
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. LI Chenggang, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of China to the WTO (TBC) • Representative of the WTO • Representative of Chad – LDC Coordinator
10:00 – 11:00	<p>LDC Accessions – Impact Assessment</p> <p><i>Moderator: (TBC)</i></p> <p>Presentation of the findings of the impact assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Patrick Low, Former WTO Chief Economist (TBC) <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 representatives of LDC acceding governments • 2-3 former accession Chief Negotiators from Afghanistan, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Liberia, Samoa or Yemen
11:00 – 11.15	<p>Coffee Break</p>
11:15 – 12:30	<p>Round Table with LDC representatives on the challenges and opportunities of WTO Accession in a post-COVID world</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Bhutan • Representative of Comoros • Representative of Ethiopia • Representative of Sao Tomé et Príncipe • Representative of Somalia • Representative of South Sudan • Representative of Sudan • Representative of Timor-Leste
12:30 – 14:00	<p>Lunch Break</p>
14:00 – 15:30	<p>Five Pillars of the China Programme – Achievements and Opportunities</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms. Bridget Chilala OR Dr. Faustin Mukela Luanga, Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation, WTO (TBC)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Taufiur Rahman, Head, LDC Unit, Development Division, WTO (TBC) • Ms. Anna Varyanik, Legal Affairs Officer, Accessions Division, WTO • Representative of Trade Policy Review Division (TBC) • Representative of the Agriculture and Commodities Division (TBC) <p>Commentators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Chad, LDC Coordinator • Former Intern under the China WTO Accessions Internship Programme

DAY 2 HIGH-LEVEL SESSION	
<p>This high-level session will take stock of the key achievements of the China Programme since its establishment in July 2011 and celebrate its 10 years anniversary. LDC Ministers and Chief Negotiators will reflect on the future of LDC accessions and how the China Programme can continue to serve its target countries in a post-COVID world. In examining ways to address accession challenges, this session aims to explore innovative and forward-looking ways to facilitate the accession of LDCs, including LDCs that are considered fragile and conflict affected.</p>	
10:00 – 10:30	<p>Celebrating 10 years of capacity-building under the China Programme</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ambassador Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General, WTO (TBC)</i></p> <p><u>Opening remarks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, WTO (TBC) • H.E. Mr. Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce, China (TBC)
10:30 – 10:45	<p>Signing Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of the China LDCs and Accessions Programme (China Programme)
10:45 – 11:00	<p>Coffee break</p>
11:00 – 12:00	<p>Reflection on the Future of LDC Accessions: Experience-sharing Session with LDC Ministers and Chief Negotiators (<i>Key topics: LDC accession and COVID-19/Trade for Peace/LDC graduation</i>)</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Bhutan • Representative of Comoros • Representative of Ethiopia • Representative of Sao Tomé et Príncipe • Representative of Somalia • Representative of South Sudan • Representative of Sudan • Representative of Timor-Leste

4 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

LDC acceding governments (Minister + 2)

- Bhutan
- Comoros
- Ethiopia
- Sao Tomé et Príncipe
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Timor-Leste

LDC Article XII Members (Minister + 2)

- Afghanistan
- Cabo Verde
- Cambodia
- Lao PDR
- Liberia
- Nepal
- Samoa
- Vanuatu
- Yemen

Resource Persons

- TBC
- TBC
- TBC
- TBC
- TBC

International Organizations

- TBC
- TBC
- TBC
- TBC
- TBC