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**Third Regional DIALOGUE on WTO Accessions for THE ARAB REGION**

"*Best practiCes in wto accessions for arab countries"*

*Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates*

*31 October- 2 N**ovember 2023*

The Arab region comprises eight acceding governments (Algeria, Comoros, Iraq, Lebanese Republic, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Syrian Arab Republic), accounting for more than one third of ongoing WTO accessions. Four Arab countries (the Kingdom of Jordan, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen) have acceded to the WTO since its establishment in 1995. Palestine continues to seek observer status to WTO ministerial conferences. The majority of Arab countries who are still outside the WTO, face a multitude of challenges that go beyond trade. These challenges have been exacerbated by the current global crises.

As a follow up to the successful second High-Level Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions which took place on 8-10 November 2021 under the theme "Arab Perspectives on WTO Accessions and the Multilateral Trading System", the third Regional Dialogue will be organized in-person in collaboration with the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) on 31 October - 2 November 2023 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The event will deliberate on the "Best Practices in WTO Accessions for Arab Countries", which is the thematic focus for this year's dialogue. The sessions will include Arab participation in the WTO, the state of play of WTO accessions in the Arab Region, and potential solutions to assist acceding governments meet their accession-related challenges. Moreover, the regional dialogue will be presenting the Joint Arab Study for WTO Accessions which is an integral part of this year's dialogue.

The Third High-Level Regional Dialogue is organized to revive the momentum among Arab acceding governments to help them advance closer to WTO Membership. Specific objectives of the event can include *interalia*:

1. To increase participants’ knowledge on the **WTO accession process, Arab Participation in the WTO, and the State-of-play of on-going Arab accessions**.

2. To present the main topics under negotiations at the WTO and **the deliverables of MC13 from an Arab perspective.**

4. To present the **main findings and recommendations of the Joint Arab Study** for WTO Accessions by sharing experiences and lessons learned.

5. To identify and mobilize **technical assistance support** to facilitate and accelerate ongoing Arab accessions in collaboration with development partners.

6. To discuss the role of the **Trade for Peace** programme in enhancing Arab Fragile and Conflict Affected (FCA) countries in accession to use trade as a vehicle for peace and stability for their countries and for the region.

Draft Programme

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|  | **DAY 1: Tuesday 31 October 2023**  |
|  | **Opening Session:**  |
| 9:00 – 10:30 | **Moderator:** Ms. Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO (TBC)**Speakers:**- Welcoming Remarks by H.E. Dr Abdulrahman A. Al Hamidy, AMF Director General Chairman of the Board (TBC)- Remarks by WTO (TBC)- Remarks by Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) (TBC)- Remarks by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) (TBC) |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | *Group Photo and Coffee break*  |
| 10:45 – 12:15 | ***Session 1:*** ***Arab Participation in the WTO: Past, Present and Future*** |
|  | **Objectives:** to give an overview of Arab Members participation in the World Trade Organization. |
|  | **Speaker:** WTO (TBC) |
| 12:15 – 13:00 | *Lunch Break*  |
| 13:00 – 15:00 | **Session 2: *Overview and State of Play of WTO Accessions in the Arab Region*** |
|  | **Objectives:** to strengthen participants’ understanding of the WTO accession process and accession-related rules; and to update the participants on the state-of-play of accessions within the region. |
|  | **Speakers:**  WTO (TBC) |
|  | **DAY 2: Wednesday 1 November 2023** |
| 8:30 – 12:00 | **Session 3: Presentation on the Joint Arab Study for WTO Accessions (1)** |
|  | **Objectives:** to present the main findings and recommendations of the Joint Arab Study for WTO Accessions |
|  | **Speakers:**  Consultants (TBC)- Partner organizations (TBC)**-** Acceding governments (TBC) and Article XII Members |
| 12:00 – 13:00 | *Lunch break*  |
| 13:00– 15:00 | **Session 4:** **Presentation on the Joint Arab Study for WTO Accessions (2)** *Technical Assistance and Capacity Building for the Arab Region* |
|  | **Objectives:** to help discuss technical assistance and support needs for Arab Acceding Governments with the relevant stakeholders and development partners based on the findings and recommendations of the Joint Arab Study |
|  | **Speakers:**  WTO (TBC)- Partner organizations (TBC)**-** Acceding governments (TBC) |
|  | **DAY 3: Thursday 2 November 2023** |
| 8:30 – 10:15 | ***Session 5: The Road to MC13*** |
|  | **Objectives:** to present on the main topics under negotiations at the WTO and the deliverables of MC13; and for Arab Observers and Article XII members to share their views in current WTO negotiations. |
|  | **Speaker:** WTO (TBC)- Article XII member governments (TBC)- Arab Observer governments |
| *10:15 – 10:30* | *Coffee break*  |
| 10:30 – 12:00 | **Session 6:  Trade for Peace through WTO Accession for the Arab Region** |
|  | **Speakers:** WTO (TBC) |
|  | **Objectives:** Many of the countries in the region are Fragile and Conflict Affected (FCA), this session will highlight the relevance and applicability of harnessing trade as a vehicle for peace through WTO accession in the Arab Region. |
| 12:00 – 13:00 | *Lunch break*  |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Closing Session  |
|  | **Speakers:**- WTO (TBC)- AMF (TBC)- IsDB (TBC) |