



WTO OMC



SECOND CENTRAL ASIA TRADE POLICY FORUM: ECONOMIC INTEGRATION THROUGH WTO ACCESSION AND MEMBERSHIP

HOTEL DOSTYK

3-5 June 2024, Almaty, Kazakhstan

DRAFT PROGRAMME (as of 31 May 2024)

The Secretariat of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the Government of Kazakhstan, will organize the second Central Asia Trade Policy Forum in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 3-5 June 2024. The thematic focus of the Forum is "Economic integration through WTO accession and membership".

This Forum will bring together senior government officials responsible for WTO-related issues from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan became members of the WTO in 1998, 2013 and 2015, respectively. Uzbekistan has intensified its WTO accession negotiations with the aim of achieving WTO membership soon. Azerbaijan reactivated its accession process in 2023 with the intention to accelerate. Turkmenistan initiated WTO accession negotiations in 2022.

Representatives of selected international organizations and the private sector will also be invited.

The objectives of this Forum are to:

- promote the integration of Central Asia into the multilateral trading system through WTO accessions; and
- share experiences and lessons learned on WTO accessions and post-accession with a view to enhancing participants' knowledge of the policy implications of WTO accession and membership.

The language of the Forum will be English, with Russian interpretation provided courtesy of the ADB and the ITC. The ITC will contribute to holding this event under the auspices of the respective European Union-funded projects implemented in the Central Asian region: "Facilitating the Process of Uzbekistan's Accession to the WTO" and "Turkmenistan: Enhancing Trade Resilience and Integration". The ADB will support this event under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program.

TIME	SESSION
DAY 1, MONDAY, 3 JUNE 2024	
09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:00	Opening ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opening remarks</i> by Aizhan Bizhanova, First Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration, Kazakhstan • <i>Welcome remarks</i> by Lyaziza Sabyrova, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, Central and West Asia Department, ADB • <i>Welcome remarks</i> by Daria Karman, Associate Programme Officer, Trade Policy and Investment Facilitation, Division of Market Development, ITC • <i>Welcome remarks</i> by Maika Oshikawa, Director, Accessions Division, WTO
10:00-10:15	Group photo
10:15-10:30	Coffee break
SESSION 1: WTO ACCESSION: PROCESS AND ACQUIS	
<p>This session will explain in detail the process of joining the WTO by distilling the multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral tracks of WTO accession negotiations. It will also review the accession "acquis" based on the experience of the 36 Article XII Members, including the benchmarks set by WTO accession commitments in the areas of WTO rules and market access.</p>	
10:30-12:30	Presentation by Dimitar Bratanov, Counsellor, WTO Accessions Division Speakers <i>Speakers are invited to identify the key challenge faced by their governments in accession negotiations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Azerbaijan (3 min) • Gurbangeldi Ashyrov, Member of the Committee for Economic Issues, Mejlis of Turkmenistan (3 min) • Representative of Uzbekistan (3 min) Commentators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aliya Alimbetova, Director, Department of Foreign Trade Activities, Ministry of Trade and Intergration, Kazakhstan • Marina Sirotina, Deputy Director, Department of Intellectual Property Rights, Ministry of Justice, Kazakhstan • Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic • Representative of Tajikistan Open discussion
12:30-14:00	Lunch break
SESSION 2: DOMESTIC PREPARATION AND COORDINATION IN ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS: PERSPECTIVES OF NEGOTIATORS	
<p>The WTO accession process typically involves domestic structural reforms encompassing a wide range of national trade and economic policies. This requires efficient coordination and management of domestic inter-ministerial and inter-agency processes, in addition to consultations with other stakeholders such as the parliament, business and academia. Enhanced internal coordination has, therefore, the potential to provide a significant boost to domestic economic and institutional reform efforts.</p>	
14:00-15:30	Presentation by Maika Oshikawa, Director, WTO Accessions Division Speakers <i>Speakers are invited to share their experiences in organizing domestic coordination processes for the benefit of the accession negotiations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Azerbaijan (3 min) • Ylham Yarashov, Head of Department of Cooperation with the WTO, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan (3 min) • Representative of Uzbekistan (3 min) Commentators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asya Ashigalieva, Advisor to the CEO of Qaztrade

TIME	SESSION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mira Tazhikenova, Chief Expert, Centre for Trade Policy Development QazTrade • Elmira Baimurzayeva, Chief Expert, Centre for Trade Policy Development QazTrade • Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic • Representative of Tajikistan <p>Open discussion</p>
15:30-16:00	Coffee break
<p>SESSION 3: CENTRAL ASIA IN THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM: THE CASE FOR WTO ACCESSION</p> <p>Sitting at the heart of ancient trade routes, Central Asia is gradually reasserting its role in global commerce. The economies of Central Asia have become active participants in the multilateral trading system through accession to the WTO. The Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan became members of the WTO in 1998, 2013 and 2015, respectively. Uzbekistan has intensified its WTO accession negotiations with the aim of achieving WTO membership soon. Turkmenistan initiated WTO accession negotiations in February 2022. In addition, countries from the region have also begun to demonstrate a leadership role in the system post-accession with Kazakhstan chairing the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022.</p> <p>This session will bring together representatives of the Central Asian countries as well as Azerbaijan – another WTO acceding country – to discuss the opportunities of WTO accession and membership, and the challenges that lie ahead for individual countries and for the region as a whole.</p>	
16:00-17:30	<p>Keynote address: Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, WTO</p> <p>Panel discussion moderated by Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan, former Minister of Economic Integration and Chief Negotiator for the WTO Accession of Kazakhstan</p> <p>Speakers <i>Speakers are invited to share views on the role they see for the WTO in the region, in particular in the context of regional and global economic integration. Speakers may also wish to comment on the functioning of the WTO, including the accession process, the role of the Secretariat, and the types of assistance that could be provided to best support the region's participation in the WTO.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arman Shakkaliyev, Minister of Trade and Integration, Kazakhstan (TBC) • Ahliddin Nuriddinzoda, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Tajikistan • Syiadat Ormonova, Head of WTO Issues Sector, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Kyrgyz Republic • Azizbek Urunov, Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession, Administration of the President, Uzbekistan • Ylham Yarashov, Head of Department of Cooperation with the WTO, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan • Nazrin Mirzazada, Deputy Head of the Standardization, Technical Regulation and Certification Department, Azerbaijan <p>Open discussion</p>

TIME	SESSION
DAY 2, TUESDAY, 4 JUNE 2024	
<p>SESSION 4: SUPPORT FOR ACCESSION AND POST-ACCESSION: PARTNERSHIP AND OUTREACH</p> <p>Technical assistance plays a key role in WTO accession and post-accession. Furthermore, coordination of technical assistance efforts by development partners remains critical to meet the evolving needs of acceding governments in a timely and tailor-made manner. This session will bring together the representatives of acceded and acceding governments from Central Asia as well as the representatives of development partners to exchange views on accession and post-accession technical-assistance.</p>	
<p>9:30-10:45</p>	<p>Presentation by Anastasia Smirnova, Legal Affairs Officer, Accessions Division, WTO</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorothea Lazaro, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB (CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 and ADB's support to Accession to and Implementation of WTO Agreements) • Daria Karman, Associate Programme Officer, Trade Policy and Investment Facilitation, Division of Market Development, ITC • Nazar Mohamed Eltahir Diab, Islamic Development Bank • David Knight, Lead Country Economist and Program Leader, Central Asia, World Bank • Mir-Anar Mammadov, Economic Affairs Officer, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD <p>Open discussion with government representatives</p>
<p>10:45-11:00</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>SESSION 5: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY THROUGH TRADE FACILITATION</p> <p>The pandemic and recent geopolitical tensions have revealed vulnerabilities in the global supply chains. These continue to disrupt international trade, including in Central Asia, the Caucasus and beyond. In this new reality, governments and businesses are seeking ways to diversify trade and transportation routes, including by reinvigorating the so-called Middle Corridor, which spans from China to Europe and crosses multiple countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus.</p> <p>Scaling up investment in hard and soft infrastructure is key to this endeavour. Developing hard infrastructure relies on investment, increased public and private partnership, and closer collaboration between the two sectors. Enhancing soft infrastructure requires simplification, and harmonization of customs procedures and regulatory frameworks to make trade easier, faster and cheaper for private operators. Implementation of multilaterally agreed rules on trade and transit, including through accession to the WTO and application of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, could significantly contribute to achieving these objectives.</p>	
<p>11:00-12:30</p>	<p>Moderator: Anastasia Smirnova, Legal Affairs Officer, Accessions Division, WTO</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman Mogilevskii, ADB (ADB Study on Trade Flows and Transport Routes in the CAREC Region Amid External Shocks) • Nadezhda Sporysheva, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE • Adelina Harunjen, Associate Programme Officer, Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business, Division of Market Development, ITC • David Knight, Lead Country Economist and Program Leader, Central Asia, World Bank • Nurlan Kulbatyrov, Deputy General Director, Centre for Trade Policy Development, QazTrade <p>Open discussion with government representatives</p>
<p>12:30-14:00</p>	<p>Lunch break</p>

TIME	SESSION
14:00-15:30	<p>SESSION 6: BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON WTO ACCESSION</p> <p>This session will serve as a "one-stop shop" for currently acceding governments (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to seek a series of bilateral meetings with the acceded members from Central Asia (the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan) as well as with the WTO Secretariat and development partners.</p>
15:30-15:45	Coffee break
15:45-17:30	SESSION 6 (continued): BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON WTO ACCESSION
DAY 3, WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2024	
<p>SESSION 7: TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT - TRADE POLICY TOOLS FOR CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Trade and trade policy can be a part of the policy "toolbox" to achieve shared climate goals. WTO accession equips future Members for using this "toolbox". Taking place in the lead-up to COP29, hosted by Azerbaijan in November 2024, this session will shed light on the nexus between trade and environment and update participants on recent developments at the WTO and other partner organizations.</p>	
9:30-10:15	Networking coffee
10:15-12:30	<p>Moderator: Dimitar Bratanov, Counsellor, WTO Accessions Division</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sajal Mathur, Counsellor, Trade and Environment Division, WTO • Pramila Crivelli, Economist, ADB (ADB's Trade Policy Tools for Climate Action) • Vidya Nathaniel, Associate Programme Officer, Trade Policy and Investment Facilitation, Division of Market Development, ITC • Ainur Amirbekova, Director of the Department of International Integration of the Centre for Trade Policy Development, QazTrade ("The Impact of CBAM on the Economies of Developing Countries") <p>Open discussion with government representatives</p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch break
SESSION 8: Closing session	
14:00-15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing comments by participants • Report on the Outcome of the Central Asia Trade Policy Forum - Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan, former Minister of Economic Integration and Chief Negotiator for the WTO Accession of Kazakhstan

FOCAL POINTS

Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the WTO

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