TRAINING ON TURKMENISTAN'S WTO ACCESSION:
PRIVATE SECTOR READINESS, MARKET ACCESS AND EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES
21–22 October 2026 | Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

BACKGROUND

Turkmenistan is advancing preparations for accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The country applied for WTO membership in November 2021 and its Working Party was established in February 2022. Since then, the Government has undertaken substantial preparatory work, supported by the WTO Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the European Union and other development partners.

As the accession process advances, there is an increasing need to complement the technical work undertaken by government agencies with a better understanding among businesses of how WTO accession may affect the operating environment, exposure to competition, access to imported inputs and services, and opportunities to enter or expand in foreign markets. Against this background, the Government of Turkmenistan has requested ADB support for training focused on the following three areas:

- Turkmenistan's WTO Accession: Implications and Opportunities for the Private Sector;
- Market Access, Tariffs and Export Opportunities under the WTO; and
- Preparing SMEs and Domestic Enterprises for Increased Competition and Access to International Markets.

In response, ADB will deliver a highly interactive training program for private-sector representatives. The program is designed to shift the focus from WTO awareness to understanding economic implications and translating these into business responses. The course will be organized around three core questions:

- What may change as a consequence of WTO accession?
- What could those changes mean for my company, sector and potential export markets?
- What should my company do to become more competitive and take advantage of new opportunities?

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of Turkmenistan's private sector to understand, anticipate and respond to the changes and opportunities associated with WTO accession and greater integration into international markets. WTO concepts will be introduced insofar as they are necessary for businesses to understand their commercial implications.

Participants are expected to:

1. Understand how WTO accession can affect the domestic business environment;
2. Distinguish between WTO tariff bindings, applied tariffs and actual market-access conditions;
3. Understand how accession may affect import competition and access to imported inputs;
4. Understand the market-access opportunities WTO membership can provide, and the limits of those opportunities;
5. Identify products and foreign markets with potential for Turkmen exporters;

6. Recognize the role of TBT, SPS, customs requirements, licensing, rules of origin and other non-tariff measures in determining effective market access;
7. Assess their company's preparedness for greater competition and internationalization;
8. Identify practical steps required to improve export readiness and competitiveness; and
9. Understand how businesses and business associations can contribute evidence and commercial perspectives to the accession process.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2026 Block 1– WTO Accession, Competition and Export Opportunities	
09:00–09:30	**REGISTRATION**
09:30–10:00	**OPENING SESSION**
	Welcome Remarks Mr. Ylham Yarashov Head of Department for Cooperation with the WTO Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan **Opening Remarks** Mr. Asad Aleem Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration Central and West Asia Department (CWRC), ADB **ADB's Trade-Related Support** Ms. Dorothea Lazaro, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRC, ADB Mr. Julian Clarke, Senior Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration and Trade Division, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, ADB **Framing and Context** Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan, Former WTO Chief Negotiator and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the World Trade Organization and International Economic Organizations in Geneva Moderator: Ms. Dorothea Lazaro, ADB
10:00–11:15	**SESSION 1: What Will WTO Accession Mean for Turkmen Businesses?**
	This session will help participants understand where Turkmenistan stands in the WTO accession process and what membership entails for the private sector. The discussion will clarify what actually changes under WTO rules, and what does not, covering tariffs and bindings, licensing requirements, customs procedures and trade facilitation, TBT and SPS measures, subsidies and State support, and the services sector. **Presenters:** Mr. Fabio Artuso (ADB Consultant) Mr. Paolo Vergano (ADB Consultant)

	Experience-sharing: Kazakhstan: Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan Moderator: Mr. Julian Clarke, ADB
11:15–11:30	☕ **MORNING COFFEE BREAK**
11:30–12:45	**INTERACTIVE EXERCISE 1: From WTO Rule To Business Impact** Groups trace hypothetical accession commitments through to effects on imports, inputs, the company and its response. **Session Guides** Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan Moderator: Mr. Julian Clarke, ADB
12:45–14:00	🍽 **LUNCH**
14.00–15:15	**SESSION 2: Increased Competition–Which Firms are Exposed and Which can Benefit**
	Drawing on sector profiles from the pre-workshop study, participants will explore export competitiveness, import exposure, the current tariff structure, and reliance on imported inputs—helping to identify which sectors and firms are most vulnerable to increased competition and which are best positioned to benefit. **Presenters:** Mr. Fabio Artuso (ADB Consultant) Mr. Paolo Vergano (ADB Consultant) Moderator: Ms. Dorothea Lazaro, ADB
15:15–15:30	☕ **AFTERNOON COFFEE BREAK**
15.30–17:00	**INTERACTIVE EXERCISE 2: Sector Impact Assessment** Group assess competitive pressures and opportunities for identified sectors, followed by plenary report-back and group discussion.
17:00–17:15	**CLOSE OF DAY 1**

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2026 Block 1 – Market Access, Export Opportunities and the Private Sector's Role	
09:30–09:45	**RECAP OF DAY 1**
09.45–11:00	**SESSION 3: Market Access, Tariffs and Export Opportunities**
	A practical look at export opportunities under WTO rules, covering MFN treatment, bound vs. applied tariffs, rules of origin, customs and SPS/TBT requirements, trade remedies, and how to distinguish real market potential from theoretical possibilities. **Presenters:** Mr. Fabio Artuso (ADB Consultant) Mr. Paolo Vergano (ADB Consultant) **Experience sharing: Kazakhstan:** Ambassador Zhanar Aitzhan
11:00–11:15	☕ **MORNING COFFEE BREAK**
11:15–12:45	**INTERACTIVE EXERCISE 3: Choosing an Export Market** Groups assess competitive pressures and opportunities for identified sectors, followed by plenary report-back and group discussion.
12:45–14:00	🍽 **LUNCH**
14:00–15:00	**PLENARY SESSION: From Opportunity to Action**
	Participants will identify what they need from the accession process, whether in terms of policy, transitional arrangements, or institutional support, and discuss what evidence the private sector can contribute to the negotiating team to help shape favorable outcomes. The session also serves as a bridge to Block 2: Preparing Firms to Compete and Participate in the Accession Process.
15:00–15:45	**SCOPING OF BLOCK 2** A discussion with participants on the timing, format, and use of the business readiness diagnostic, including the feasibility of holding a follow-up session after 2 months.
15:45–16:30	**CLOSING SESSION**
	Wrap Up and Next Steps Mr. Julian Clarke, ADB Ms. Dorothea Lazaro, ADB **Closing Remarks** Mr. Asad Aleem, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, Central and West Asia Department (CWRC), ADB Mr. Ylham Yarashov, Head of Department for Cooperation with the WTO, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan