

Geneva Trade & Development Forum: Inclusive Globalization

New Comers and International Trade Rules TOR

Update of the progress: 30.05.08

The informal WTO Accession Group, whose "shepherd" is Simon Evenett (University of St Gallen, Switzerland), has had several in-depth conference calls. Participants in the group include experts from least-developed countries, legal, economic and development experts and practitioners, and senior officials from certain international organisations (participating in their own capacity.) In its deliberations the group has sought to develop recommendations in the following three areas (1) the preparation of developing nations, including least developed countries, for WTO accession, (2) steps to improve the capacities of acceding nations before, during, and after negotiations to join the WTO, and (3) the appropriate balance of rights and obligations for least developed countries (LDCs) to join the WTO.

The discussions among the group have identified no less than 20 practical ways in which progress could be made, although for presentation and organisational purposes those recommendations may be consolidated into a smaller number. The recommendations are relevant to all parties associated with the WTO accession process and seek to be both balanced and comprehensive. In coming conference calls further thought will be given to those recommendations, to their coherence, and to their presentation.

The informal WTO Accession Group also decided to prepare two short case studies of country accession experience. Originally, the thought was to focus on Vietnam however the point was made that many of the countries that are yet to accede are from the Middle East. It was therefore decided to add a case study on Saudi Arabia's experience, especially in the light of the fact that that country has been offering considerable advice to certain countries in its region.