



**ACCESSION OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO THE WTO:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

A paper prepared for the Tenth China Roundtable, 18-20 January 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

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eligible for LDC status.² The Committee relies on the following three criteria to guide its recommendations:

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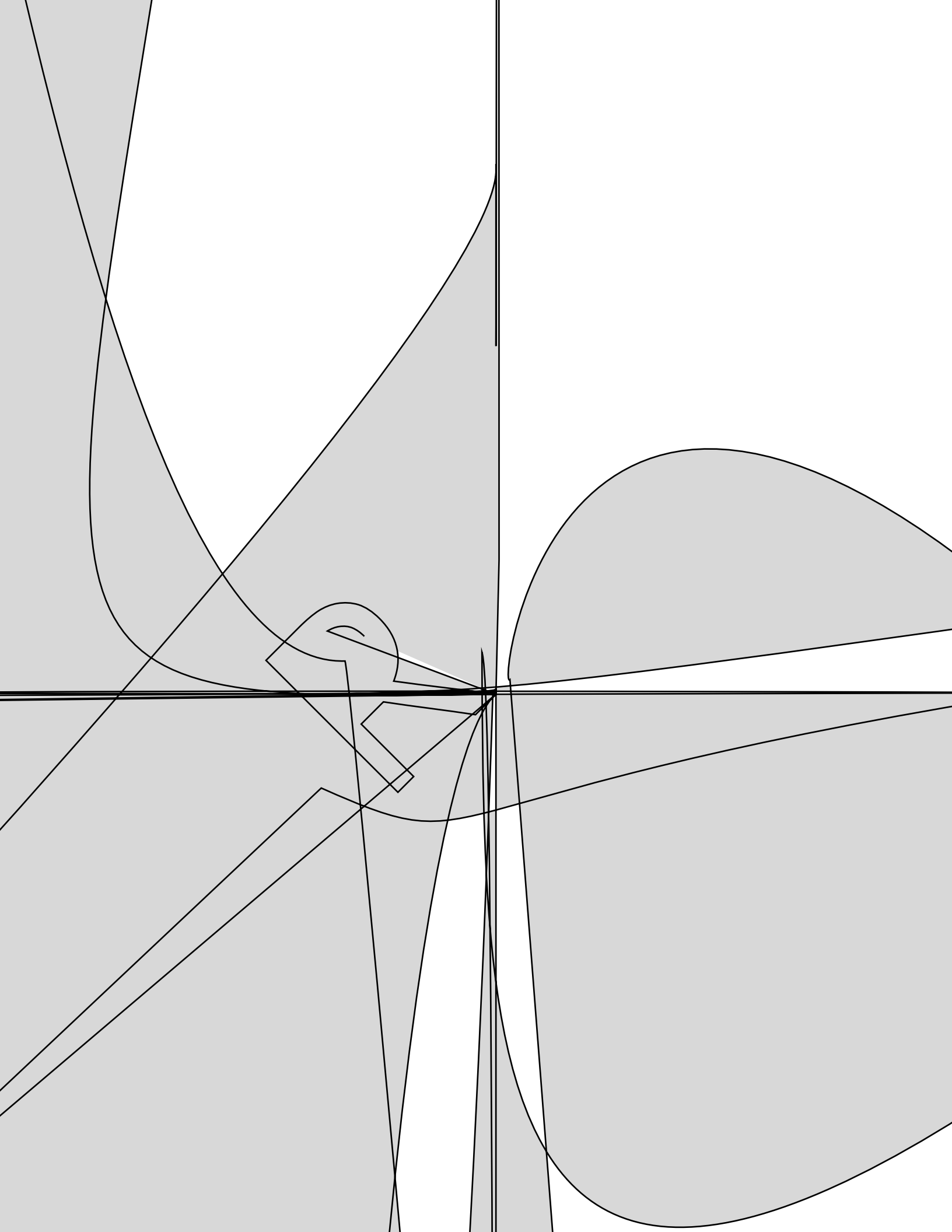
emphasis is at the nub of the linkages between the GATT/WTO and the United Nations in fostering the development of LDCs. Declarations coming out of the UN LDC conferences have frequently referred to market access for LDCs, other GATT/WTO issues under negotiation, as well as WTO accession for LDCs.

2.2 Least developed countries and the GATT/WTO

14. The first mention of least developed countries in the GATT followed not long after the 1971 UN Resolution establishing the category. It came in Paragraph(e 197)13.3 3

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61. Table 4 shows the outcomes of market access negotiations on goods and services of Article XII LDC Members. The binding coverage of tariff concessions on goods is 100 per cent for almost all these Members, with a few exceptions involving Afghanistan and Nepal. As Table 5 shows, in the case of original LDC Members, the average binding coverage is 53.7 per cent. Moreover, while LDCs in general have higher average final bound rates than non-LDCs, Article XII LDC Members have an average final bound rate of 22.4 per cent compared to 65.2 per cent for original LDC Members. Finally, all Members, including LDCs, generally have higher average final bound rates for agricultural products than for non-agricultural products.

62. In the case of services, significant reductions have been made in regulatory barriers by Article XII LDC Members. They have undertaken commitments in specific sub-sectors of nearly all services sectors identified in accordance with the United Nations Provisional Central Product Classification (CPC Prov.) 1991, with the exception of Cabo Verde and Samoa, that did not commit in the health-related and social services sector, and Vanuatu and Lao PDR, that did not commit in recreational, cultural and sporting services. Overall, Article XII LDC Members undertook specific commitments in an average number of 87 services sub-sectors. This is a much higher level of commitment than that of the Original LDC Members, with an average of 20 services sub-sectors.

Table 4: Summary of Article XII LDC Accession Market Access Outcomes on Goods and Services

Article XII LDC Members	Date of Membership	Binding coverage (%)	GOODS			SERVICES	
			Average final bound rate (%)			Number of services sub-sectors	
			All products	Agricultural products	Non-agricultural products		
1	Afghanistan	30/07/2016	96.6	13.5	33.6	10.3	104
2	Cabo Verde	23/07/2008	100	15.8	19.3	15.2	103
3	Cambodia	13/10/2004	100	19.1	28.1	17.7	94
4	Lao PDR	2/2/2013	100	18.8	19.3	18.7	79
5	Liberia	14/07/2016	100	26.7	23.8	27.2	102



73. Afghanistan was the first LDC to establish a full-fledged mission to WTO and this gave the country a unique opportunity to utilize its membership to the maximum, including chairing WTO committees and interacting with Members on several trade, transit, investment and capacity-building related activities. Cambodia became the second country among the nine Article XII LDCs to establish a mission to the WTO in Geneva. Most other Article XII LDCs have focal points in their UN mission in Geneva who handle WTO issues.

6 PARTICIPATING IN THE WTO

74. Once a country becomes Member of the WTO, they must engage in the day-to-day work of the Organization to achavgot

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Trade Facilitation Agreement

78. The negotiation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) was completed in December 2013 and

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Table 11: Number of Members raising questions to Article XII LDCs on specific topics

Questions received on:	Trade Facilitation	Customs Valuation	Anti- Dumping	SCM
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Chart 3: S

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Assign a Liaison Officer in the UN Mission in Geneva

110. During the accession process regular contact with the WTO Secretariat and WTO Members is essential but as the acceding governments cannot send a representative to the WTO before accession, it is important to send a dedicated person to the country's mission in Geneva to coordinate work with the WTO and capital. This will help establish a direct link between the WTO and the lead ministry.

Use your accession process for domestic reforms

111. Accession to the WTO is not a single action, but rather a process that evaluates the country's economic and legal situation. It is a process that involves the country's government, the WTO Secretariat, and WTO Members. The process is a continuous one, and it is important to have a dedicated person in Geneva to coordinate work with the WTO and capital. This will help establish a direct link between the WTO and the lead ministry.

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