

Tuesday 21 March 2017

Session 2: Structural Reforms and accession negotiation strategies

10.15am – WTO accession negotiation strategies: The case of Samoa [10 minutes]

1. Samoa negotiated its WTO membership as a Least Developed Country. We concluded negotiations at the end of 2011 and the 8th Ministerial Conference in December 2011 in Geneva adopted Samoa's Accession Protocol. Two years later, Samoa graduated from LDC status in 2014. Our target, and perhaps overall strategy was to negotiate the terms of accession as a LDC before we graduated.

Prior to submitting our application in 1998, we had undertaken a cost-benefit

process and boundaries in which the negotiations would be conducted. Samoa had often referred to the Guidelines, especially when confronted with requests from members that we believed Samoa was not able to deliver on.

4. But at the same time, it was equally important for Samoa that we were able to demonstrate to WTO members our willingness to undertake reforms where appropriate and sustainably beneficial for Samoa, noting that further work would be required to achieve compliance with WTO rules and principles. Samoa understood that negotiations required flexibility and compromise at some stage. It was a process of finding balance between national interests, ability to implement and conforming to WTO rules.
5. This was when planning, plans of plans... of all sorts became crucial. The conclusion of our negotiations would not have been possible without the mutual agreement to plan on how Samoa would transition to meet WTO rules.
6. The absence of a Samoa mission in Geneva probably contributed to the prolonged process for us. We used most opportunities that brought us to Geneva for other meetings to hold informal Working Party Meetings and progress bilateral negotiations. You will see from the WTO Accession Acquis that Samoa only had 2 Working Party Meetings. Between that were several informal sessions in Geneva. The leadership of our Working Party Chair (Japan) came through in facilitating this.
7. Between visits to Geneva we communicated via email with the Secretariat and our bilateral partners. The (l)-5.879 (a)-3.-8.4 -8.4 (T)-4.2 (he)-1.7 (5-5.7 (e)-1.7.9 (m)2.)- Samoa to facilitate negotiations resulting in earlieGe cmusim of bilateralTprnegotiations

8. Financial and technical assistance was readily available - Coordination was important and continues to be in terms of making the assistance targeted to the needs and priorities of Samoa.
9. Political commitment is an absolute necessity as we heard from the interventions yesterday. The last 12 months of the process saw the deputy