

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Significant progress has been made by Albania towards the integration into European family and the intensification of relations with our main trade partner, the European Union. The launch of the negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union is considered by the Albanian Government as an important milestone in this process and as the beginning of a long and complex road toward deeper economic and trade, as well as institutional and legal reforms.

Reforms recently undertaken by Albania go even further than the WTO boundaries. The very liberal commitments related to agricultural and non-agricultural products market access, are beyond the levels agreed upon during the negotiations of the Uruguay Round. Albania is a small country to affect the global trade but even the smallest changes in the global trade rules, could have profound effects in the Albanian economy.

On the agricultural products market access, as a recently acceding country, Albania is requiring flexibility on the modalities for reduction on these issues:

1. Exemption of low duties from further reduction commitments;
2. providing for lower tariff reduction and longer implementation period for new commitments;
3. providing a grace period - recent acceding Members should begin the implementation of new commitments several years after the beginning of implementation period for all Members; or, several years after the end of accession implementation period, whichever is later.

Since its accession, Albania was in favour of the liberalization and elimination of trade-distorting domestic subsidies in agriculture, and submitted a schedule that served also as a model for other countries. But as a country with an economy in transition where the agriculture sector still provides a very important share in the GDP, being at the same time a base for the development of agro-processing industry, we esteem that the subsidies that fall under the category Green Box measures are still very important for the increase of efficiency in this sector. Therefore, provisions on flexibility are useful for the beginning of the implementation period as well as the length of this period.

On trade in services, Albania has made very liberal commitment during the membership process; that is why we invite other Member countries to undertake further liberal step in their actual commitments.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Albania, the Mexican authorities and the WTO Secretariat for the outstanding organization of the Fifth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference. I also would like to extend my compliments to the WTO Director-General, the Chairman of the General Council and all the Members for the effort they have made to achieve progress on negotiations related to sensitive but important issues. This is a crucial step towards the fulfilment of the tasks jointly undertaken in the Doha mandate.
