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**Working Party on the Accession of the Union of the
Comoros**

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ACCESSION OF THE UNION OF THE COMOROS

**GENERAL COUNCIL ITEM 11: BRIEFING ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ACCESSION OF
COMOROS – REQUEST FROM MOROCCO**

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Omar Zniber (Morocco), Chairperson of the Working Party

25 July 2023

1. Thank you, Chair. I would like to brief the General Council on the latest developments in the Accession of Comoros in my capacity as Chair of the Working Party of the Accession of the Union of the Comoros.¹
2. Members will recall that the Working Party was established in 2007. The Working Party held its 1st Meeting in 2016 and seven more meetings since then. I chaired the three most recent meetings since 2021, when I took over the Chairmanship from Ambassador Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA of Peru. During my time as Chairman, I have been consistently impressed by the determination, commitment, and hard work by the Government of Comoros to join the WTO.
3. At the most recent 8th Working Party Meeting, held on 19 January of this year, WTO Members noted the substantial progress made by Comoros towards concluding WTO accession - with many delegations expressing support for the completion of the accession process at MC13. The Delegation of Comoros, led by Minister Ahmed Ali Bazi - who was supposed to be with us during this session of the General Council, but unfortunately is not, due to agenda issues - conveyed Comoros' aspiration to conclude the negotiations in 2023. Members were very supportive, although it was understood that substantive work remained in certain areas.
4. Less than 4 months later, on the 4th of May, the Working Party reached a significant milestone. The draft Goods and Services Schedules, which contain Comoros' future market access concessions and specific commitments, were verified by the Members which had concluded bilateral market access negotiations with Comoros. These Schedules have now been "cleared" for formal adoption by the Working Party.² This is a very significant development as two of the three key elements constituting Comoros' draft Accession Package are now ready. I would like to thank the Members involved, Comoros, and the Secretariat - which consolidated the bilateral agreements - for this important achievement.
5. In parallel, work has progressed well on the third element of the Accession Package, which is the draft Report of the Working Party. While the Report is at a fairly advanced stage of technical maturity, a handful of issues remain relating to the conformity of Comoros' foreign trade regime with WTO rules. Work has been taking place bilaterally between Comoros and interested Members, focusing on the elaboration of specific legally-binding commitments and the integration of issue-specific action plans in the Report. This important technical work is ongoing and is set to continue throughout the summer. I understand that the bilateral engagement has been constructive and that delegations are now in a problem-solving mode, particularly these past few weeks. This is very encouraging. I hope that flexibility and pragmatism will continue to prevail. Here, I would also like

¹ A Chair progress report on the accession of Comoros was circulated in preparation for MC12 in document [WT/MIN\(22\)/1](#).

² Documents [WT/ACC/SPEC/COM/6/Rev.1](#) and [WT/ACC/SPEC/COM/7/Rev.1](#).

to remind Comoros that some of the pending items will only be resolved through legislative amendments. In particular, Comoros still has work to do on its existing copyright legislation and on filling gaps in its legislative framework on customs valuation. Mr. Bazi promised that all work in these fields will be achieved as soon as possible, in any case before the end of the summer.

6. It is important to recognize that, if we are to have this accession ready in time for MC13, all substantive work would need to be wrapped up very soon - bearing in mind that there are certain procedural steps for the Working Party to take before formally concluding its mandate. With this in mind, following consultations, I have determined that the Working Party should hold its 9th Meeting as soon as possible after the summer break, no later than in the week of 25 September.³

7. To the extent possible, the goal of the 9th Meeting should be to complete all technical work, in particular with respect to commitment language for the draft Report. Comoros has already submitted several documents⁴ requested by the Working Party and more will be issued in the coming weeks, as I underlined before. In particular, before the September meeting, the Secretariat will circulate an updated draft Report, together with Comoros' replies to questions. Thereafter, it is my hope to hold the final meeting of the Working Party before the end of the year to conclude its mandate. I hope, of course, before the last General Council meeting of the year. The draft Accession Package will then be transmitted to the 13th Ministerial Conference for formal adoption. I believe that this goal is attainable, as long as Members and Comoros maintain their focus, as they promised.

8. It is important to remember that, from the perspective of acceding governments, WTO membership holds the promise of greater economic growth, higher living standards, better jobs, and ultimately the promise of long-term stability and peace. This is particularly relevant for acceding LDCs. It is important that, for our part, as Members, we support the ambitions of vulnerable economies, such as Comoros, which have shown commitment to the values of the WTO and have clearly demonstrated willingness to adapt to its rules and principles. I therefore call on Members to continue to engage constructively in this LDC accession and to support Comoros in its efforts to achieve its objectives - in line with the promise made by WTO Ministers in paragraph 6 of the MC12 Outcome Document.

9. I would like also to underline the very strong commitment and engagement of our Director-General in this process. She spared no effort in trying to help us catch our goal in the weeks ahead. The Director-General is in contact with the highest level of leadership in Comoros. The President of Comoros is also personally involved. Likewise, here in Geneva we are doing our best to inform in detail all interested delegations.

10. To conclude, I have no doubt that Comoros, currently holding the Presidency of the African Union, will add a valuable voice to the multilateral trading system as a new Member - knowing that WTO accessions are pending now for many years. It is for us time to take the right decision to give clearance.

11. As Chairperson, I remain committed to doing all necessary work to finalise the mandate of the Working Party by the end of this year - 16 years after its establishment. I remain available to respond to any questions Members may have on my report.

12. I would also like to conclude by raising the role of my predecessor in this capacity, Ambassador Luis Enrique CHÁVEZ BASAGOITIA of Peru, who did a lot. It is an occasion for me to salute him and to praise again the work that he has done.

³ Chair communication to the Working Party of 10 July 2023. The week of 17 July had been initially proposed in the Chair communication to the Working Party of 24 May 2023.

⁴ A revised legislative action plan ([WT/ACC/COM/9/Rev.8](#)), revised action plans in specific issue areas ([WT/ACC/COM/23/Rev.6](#)), legislation and consultation documents ([WT/ACC/COM/39](#) and [40](#)), and updated supporting tables on agriculture domestic support ([WT/ACC/SPEC/COM/3/Rev.1](#)).