

NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Series

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IRAN'S ACCESSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION: AN IMPEDIMENT OR A CATALYST FOR DEVELOPMENT?

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Anna Nussbaum Auditorium, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
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Abstract

Since Iran was formally accepted as an observer to the World Trade Organization (“WTO”) in June 2005, there have been heated internal debates on the opportunities and challenges of joining the multilateral trading system. Both sides of the debate have made exaggerated claims about the pros and cons of Iran’s accession to the WTO. By examining the range of essential accession commitments, especially regarding latecomers to the WTO, this chapter argues that Iran’s accession, if negotiated properly, has the potential to improve the country’s institutional quality in terms of trade/economic policy formulation and implementation. At the same time, due to longtime relative isolation from the global economy and presence of uncompetitive industrial and services sectors, WTO accession, if executed without a clear vision and policy precision, could involve a high, if not prohibitive, adjustment costs. It is therefore recommended that, on the technical level, various components of WTO accession policy be regarded as potential tools for fostering and embedding Iran’s pre-existing but long overdue long-term economic reform plans. On the political level, in order for Iran to reap the full developmental benefits of accession in terms of achieving higher export diversification and sophistication, it is necessary for its WTO accession

strategy to be viewed at the high leadership level, and in a broader geopolitical context, as an important gateway for its multilevel engagement with the global economy.

Biography of the Speaker

Sadeq Z. Bigdeli is a member of the Law Faculty at Shahid Beheshti University (Tehran) and an honorary lecturer at the University of Waikato. In the period between 2014 and 2016, he was in charge of Iran’s WTO accession file, trade agreements as well as bilateral economic dialogue with the EU, Switzerland and a number of other countries. In his capacity as Chief Trade Negotiator appointed by the Minister for Industry, Mines and Trade, Dr. Bigdeli succeeded in culminating the diplomatic support of the majority of key WTO member States in the form of a collective statement in the General Council in favor of reactivating Iran’s accession process. Together with the WTO Secretariat, he designed a roadmap for the resumption of Iran’s accession process for the first time. He also designed a new strategy for Iran’s preferential trade agreements and led a few rounds of negotiations for a number of trade agreements including a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Community.

**Participation is free of charge, no registration is needed.
We warmly welcome you to join our seminar at the World Trade Institute!**

NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Seminars are 30-minute presentations, given by external or in-house researchers. The presentations are followed by a 30-minute Q&A session. The Brown Bag concept comes from the US; it means that people bring their own lunch and eat it during the presentation.