

Experience and Expectation: The 20th Annual Academic Conference on WTO and China

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On December 8, 2021, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of China's accession to the WTO, a high-level forum during the 20th Annual Academic Conference on WTO and China was successfully held at the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE). This forum was co-hosted by the China Internet Network News Center, China Society for World Trade Organization Studies (CWTO) and UIBE. It was co-organized by the Network on International Trade and Investment System, UIBE's China Institute for WTO Studies (CIWTO), and the WTO Chairs Programme.

Over the past 20 years, China's accession to the WTO has provided a steady source of momentum for its development and progress, and China is playing an increasingly important role in safeguarding and developing the multilateral trading system. The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12), originally scheduled for December 2021, has been postponed again due to the impact of COVID-19. Faced with multiple challenges, the development of the multilateral trading system urgently needs new impetus. On the other hand, China's influence on and participation in the WTO continues to increase. In 2021, CIWTO was successfully selected for Phase 3 of the WTO Chairs Programme, winning the second chair for China. This indicates that China's theoretical and policy research capabilities, international talent development and international influence in WTO studies has gained extensive recognition. In this context, China's top WTO experts and scholars gathered to focus on the impact of China's accession to the WTO, its full implementation of WTO rules and contributions to the WTO's development, and other topics. In addition, it

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provided the most recent plan for China to more effectively safeguard the multi-lateral trading system and create a community with a shared future for mankind.

More than 20 distinguished guests and renowned scholars accepted invitations to attend this annual conference, including Chen Deming (Former Minister of Commerce), Long Guoqiang (Deputy Director-General of the Development Research Center of the State Council), Zhang Xiangchen (Deputy Director-General of the WTO), Li Chenggang (Chinese Ambassador to the WTO), Yi Xiaozhun (General Counsel of the Network on International Trade and Investment Systems and Former WTO Deputy Director-General), Gao Anming (Deputy Director and Editor-in-Chief of the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration), Jiang Qingzhe (Secretary of UIBE's Party Committee), Xia Wenbin (President of UIBE), Wang Huiyao (Director-General of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and Counselor of the State Council), Wang Xiaohui (Editor-in-chief of China.org.cn and the Website "China's Diplomacy in the New Era"), Huo Jianguo (Vice-Chairman of the CWTO), Hong Xiaodong (Former Director-General of the World Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce), Liu Yuanchun (Vice-President of Renmin University of China), Wang Qiang (Vice-President of UIBE), Luo Yuze (Vice Director-General of the Research Department of Foreign Economics, Development Research Center of the State Council), Zhang Yansheng (Chief Researcher of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges), Li Minglin (Vice-Chairman of the CWTO), Yang Xinhua (Deputy Chief Editor of China.org.cn), Wang Yong (Professor at Peking University's School of International Studies), Dong Yan (Researcher at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), and Chen Weidong (Professor of UIBE's School of Law).

I. OPENING CEREMONY AND KEYNOTE SPEECHES

The opening ceremony was hosted by Wang Xiaohui. Jiang Qingzhe, Gao Anming and Li Minglin delivered speeches.

Jiang Qingzhe reviewed China's achievements and contributions during

the past 20 years since its accession to the WTO, reviewed the indissoluble bond between UIBE and WTO, and emphasized the major significance of the opportunities and challenges that China presently faces. Gao Anming said that China's accession to the WTO was a major strategic decision it made based on its comprehensive analysis of the domestic and international situation and was in line with global development trends. Twenty years after China's accession to the WTO, it has rapidly developed its economy, continually promoted the world's prosperity and development, and transformed itself from a participant to a leader in global economic governance. In the future, China will continue to create a community with a shared future for mankind while building a prosperous and beautiful world. Li Minglin emphasized the significance of this conference. The WTO ministerial meeting has been postponed again. This conference was held not only to review the experience and process of China's entry into the WTO throughout the past 20 years, but was also convened in response to questions, intended to discuss trade policy reviews as well as the future direction of WTO reforms along with several key problems, ultimately contributing to safeguarding the multilateral trading system.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINA'S ACCESSION TO THE WTO FOR REFORM AND OPENING UP

The theme of the forum's first section was "Accession to the WTO: A Milestone of China's Reform and Opening Up". It was chaired by Xia Wenbin. Chen Deming, Yi Xiaozhun and Long Guoqiang delivered speeches.

Chen Deming stressed that China's success depends on the system it has established for opening up, and it will stay committed to this policy to promote reform, development, and innovation. China's success represents the success of its autonomy and opening up, and institutional opening up exemplifies the successful experience of its accession to the WTO. In the future, China still needs to ensure a high level of institutional opening up to achieve high-quality domestic circulation, and institutional opening up is necessary for sustaining reform and opening up.

Yi Xiaozhun recalled his experience since participating in negotiations for the resumption of China's GATT membership. He said that China's accession to the WTO not only provided a direction for its reform and opening up, but also continues to influence its economic and trade policies. China has experienced comprehensive institutional opening up, and found a path from passive to active opening up. Summarizing China's experience gained from its accession to the WTO is highly significant for China to contribute its strength to the multilateral trading system as well as to provide impetus and support for the world's future economic development.

Long Guoqiang reviewed the significance of the past 20 years since China's accession to the WTO, along with its historical and realistic significance, which has been to effectively promote China's reform and opening up. He summarized that the experience of China's accession to the WTO has a special and practical significance. China must grasp strategic opportunities to participate in future international competition, create a new development dynamic, and cultivate the new advantages of foreign cooperation.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINA'S ACCESSION TO THE WTO FOR ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The theme of the forum's second section was "Accession to the WTO: The Booster of China's Economic Development". It was hosted by Yang Xinhua. Liu Yuanchun, Huo Jianguo and Zhang Yansheng delivered speeches.

Liu Yuanchun reviewed China's economic development during the 20 years before and after its accession to the WTO by focusing on three aspects. Firstly, after China's accession to the WTO, foreign demand strengthened China's imports and exports, which not only developed its market but also enhanced its factories. Secondly, domestic and foreign capital circulation effectively contributed to forming its domestic and international circulation. Finally, looking ahead to the new development stage, he inspired the audience by stressing that the nation should strive to build a new development dynamic that uses the domestic market to promote the international market and uses the

domestic market to control the international market.

Huo Jianguo reviewed measures that China has taken to implement reforms in several major fields during the 15 years before its accession to the WTO. He mentioned that this event was a historical breakthrough achieved while guided by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's clear goals, firm principles, resolute position, and negotiations amidst reform. This summary of the experience that China has gained from its accession to the WTO is highly significant for its future high-level opening up.

Zhang Yansheng analyzed the future of Sino-US cooperation, the WTO, and globalization from the perspective of China's globalization during the 20 years since it joined the WTO. He argued that China should cooperate with developed and developing countries to pursue shared development.

IV. ANALYSES AND ADVICE REGARDING CHINA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF WTO RULES

The theme of the forum's third section was "China's Implementation of WTO Rules". It was hosted by Wang Qiang. Li Chenggang, Hong Xiaodong, Wang Yong and Chen Weidong delivered speeches.

Ambassador Li Chenggang provided a detailed introduction to the implementation of WTO rules that focused on the aspects of specific reform measures and China's WTO obligations. Li said that the audience should demonstrate confidence in China's performance of these rules, and should also be rational and open to having other WTO Members conduct a performance evaluation for China. Moreover, he emphasized that China should actively participate in negotiations on new issues and WTO-related issues to prove itself as a capable Member of this organization.

Hong Xiaodong said that China's growing strength is an indispensable pillar for its great achievements while pursuing opening up and joining the WTO. Furthermore, he explained that China has not only performed well in fulfilling its commitments and opening up independently, but also made notable contributions to ITA expansion negotiations along with agreements on facilitation of trade and investment facilitation. He also stressed that the recently finished

Joint Statement Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation demonstrates China's determination to promote high-level opening-up and enhance the transparency of its domestic regulatory system.

Wang Yong analyzed China's implementation of the WTO rules from the perspective of political economics. As an ideal implementer of WTO obligations, China has set an outstanding example of using opening up to pursue its development. In the context of global political and economic adjustments, he stressed that China should not only predict the economic problems related to its future performance of its obligations, but also combine it with adjustments of globalization and international political dynamics. In addition, he emphasized that in the future, it is essential to fully consider all parties' realistic expectations for China's implementation of its obligations and promote a new round of economic globalization by intensifying its reform and opening up.

Chen Weidong explained China's implementation of WTO rules by emphasizing a legal perspective. China's domestic implementation of WTO rules is not only an unprecedented challenge, but also an unprecedented opportunity. While faced with the economic anti-globalization, China should coordinate the three aspects of international, regional, and national to further improve and perfect its domestic implementation mechanism of the WTO rules.

V. ANALYSIS OF CHINA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WTO

The theme of the forum's fourth section was "China's Contributions to the Development of the WTO", hosted by Tu Xinquan (Dean of CIWTO). Zhang Xiangchen, Wang Huiyao, Luo Yuze and Dong Yan delivered speeches.

Wang Huiyao analyzed China's contributions to the WTO by considering four aspects. Wang explained that the past 20 years since China's accession to WTO has profoundly influenced China and the world, and the current period of WTO reforms is a crucial point in time. While focusing on reshaping the WTO's influence, China can pursue reforms of the WTO by emphasizing the achievements in promoting regional agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Wang also

mentioned that China should enhance its leadership position to promote WTO reforms by focusing on think tanks, and talent development, and other factors.

Starting from the WTO platform's overall objectives and functions, Luo Yuze elaborated on China's important contributions to the WTO in terms of expanding production and markets, helping developing countries to build capacity, participating in the global trade rules system, solving trade problems, and providing venues for trade negotiations.

Dong Yan centered her discussion on the perspective of economic globalization and the global trade governance system. She argued that in the future, China could increase its dominance by using the evolution of global trade governance system to promote its own ideas, and could also build an institutional environment that would be suitable for the new era's development trends.

Zhang Xiangchen said that China has contributed to the WTO by participating in the Programme of China Round Table on WTO Accessions for LDCs, and has also assisted other developing countries with participating more actively in international trade and the global value chain. He mentioned that when faced with the question of how other countries dealt with China's accession to the WTO, he stressed that China should correctly understand the effects of globalization, and should also comprehensively compare and analyze the WTO's economic benefits. In addition, he explained that in the future, as China's economy and strength keeps growing, its contributions to the WTO will continue to increase. Therefore, he argued that China should continue to actively participate in WTO negotiations, play a leading and model role, unite and lead other developing countries, and promote WTO reforms. Tu Xinquan concluded that China has attained unique achievements ever since its accession to the WTO and its exemplary role in the WTO is highly significant. China can collaborate with the majority of developing countries to further promote WTO reforms.

The Annual Academic Conference on WTO and China is an important platform for Chinese and international experts in related fields to discuss WTO issues and the multilateral trading system to provide a new perspective and the latest information for policy making and academic research. During this forum, numerous scholars and specialists extensively reviewed the positive

interaction trends of China-WTO relations during the past twenty years. They also reviewed how, during the years since China's accession to the WTO, it implemented a new development dynamic of "dual circulation", offered advice for WTO reforms, and also conducted extensive and in-depth exchanges and discussion on topics such as economic globalization, the multilateral cooperation system, and China's development. This is the latest proposal for China to enhance its ability to safeguard the multilateral trading system and create a community with a shared future for mankind. It has major practical significance and can link the past with the future.