



Next Steps for RCEP Accession Process

1. As the next step to advance accession process, RCEP Participating Countries (RPCs) establish an ad hoc Accession Working Group (AWG). The ad hoc AWG will decide on the mode of engagement e.g., discussion or negotiations for aspirant economies. In order to do this, the ad hoc AWG will establish sub-working groups.
2. A sub-working group will be established for each of the following aspirant economies:
 - a. Bangladesh
 - b. Chile
 - c. Hong Kong, China
 - d. Sri Lanka

The ad hoc AWG may establish or modify sub-working groups as required.

3. Each sub-working group will undertake preparatory discussions with each aspirant economy to assess and determine, individually and on their own merits, their readiness to meet the requirements set out in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the Procedures for Accession to the RCEP Agreement.
4. The sub-working groups will report regularly to the ad hoc AWG on the progress of their work and proposed work programme. These reports could include a consensus recommendation on whether to commence negotiations with each aspirant economy or otherwise.
5. Should the sub-working groups determine that the four current aspirant economies are at different levels of readiness, preparatory discussions will likely progress at difference paces.
6. The ad hoc AWG will report to the RJC the progress of each sub-working group as well as the overall development of the accession process regularly. The RJC will then regularly report the progress to the RCEP Ministers' Meeting (RMM).
7. The preparatory discussions will not constitute, guarantee or preclude the commencement of negotiations with any of the four aspirant economies.
8. All decisions, including whether to take forward recommendations to commence negotiations with each aspirant economy, or otherwise, will continue to be by consensus among the RPCs.
9. The abovementioned approach will not prevent the consideration and discussion of other accession requests.