

**BELARUS ENTERING THE WTO:
THREATS AND BENEFITS
ВСТУПЛЕНИЕ БЕЛАРУСИ В ВТО:
УГРОЗЫ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА**

Вступление Беларуси в ВТО — один из важнейших этапов интеграции страны в мировую экономику. В работе рассматриваются проблемы, с которыми Беларусь может столкнуться при присоединении к ВТО, а также несомненные преимущества, которые даст ей членство в этой организации.

The accession of Belarus to the WTO is considered to be one of the most important stages of integration into the world economy, which will provide the country with tools necessary for protection and promotion of national interests within the international trade system. At the same time accession to the WTO sets Belarus a task to bring its economic legislation in compliance with the WTO rules as well as to make balanced concessions to commercial partners in order to provide a more open access of foreign goods, services and capital investment to home market.

The relationship between Belarus and the WTO began in 1992 when our republic was given the observer status, and in 1993 the Working Party for the accession of Belarus to the WTO was created. Since then much work has been done, a lot of obstacles of economic and political nature have been overcome, as a result, Belarus is now at the threshold of the WTO.

It is essential to foresee all the threats and to evaluate all the benefits which the country will gain from entering the WTO. The major benefits are the following: creation of safer and more predictable trade conditions for Belarusian exporters; wide dissemination of 'the most favorable conditions' policy; better access to sales markets; possibility to influence the world trade system through direct participation in the WTO events.

Although the listed advantages dominate, the social and economic expenses which Belarus will face when it enters the WTO as a rightful member should be considered. They will appear in the period of adaptation to the rules of stricter international competition in the atmosphere of foreign-trade liberalization. Economic expenses for Belarusian enterprises can imply cutting off direct and indirect governmental aid. As one of the main principles of the WTO is to provide equal conditions for all international trade partners. The most serious problems may arise in the agricultural sector. That is why Belarusian experts must identify those industries and products, which are to be protected with the help of customs tariffs.

Russia, Belarus' major trading partner, is likely to become a member of the WTO earlier than Belarus. This may cause various problems, connected with Russia's liabilities to the WTO, on the one hand, and its bilateral agreements with Belarus, on the other hand.