



Council of the
European Union

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14761/15

LIMITE

PV CONS 68
RELEX 984

DRAFT MINUTES

Subject: **3430th** meeting of the Council of the European Union
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS) held in Brussels on 27 November 2015

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1. **Adoption of the agenda**

14452/15 OJ/CONS 68 RELEX 959

The Council adopted the above agenda.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

2. **Approval of the list of 'A' items**

14455/15 PTS A 92

The Council approved the 'A' items listed in 14455/15.

3. **Council Conclusions on Trade**

= Adoption

14240/15 WTO 247 SERVICES 44 FDI 20 COMER 147 DEVGEN 230
RELEX 943 COMPET 521

+ COR 1

+ COR 2 (fr, it, el, es, pt, lv, lt, pl, sk, sl, bg, ro, ga)

+ COR 3 (et)

+ COR 4 (sl)

The Council adopted the conclusions set out in 14240/15.

4. **Preparations for the 10th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference**

= State of play

14427/15 WTO 250

The Commissioner briefed the Council on the latest state of play on the work of and prospects for the 10th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Nairobi.

Regarding the Nairobi Package, the Commissioner outlined the main elements that appeared to be the most promising, namely: development issues, with particular emphasis on the least developed countries (LDC); export competition in agriculture and a set of possible results to improve transparency.

Regarding negotiations on the possible Ministerial Declaration and on post-Nairobi activities, the Commissioner put forward three topics for discussion on the latter: 1) the possibility of prioritising work on DDA-related issues that can be more effectively dealt with at multilateral level, especially domestic support and the rules; 2) the possibility of launching initiatives for plurilateral negotiations after the Ministerial Conference; and 3) the inclusion of new issues in the future work of the Organisation.

Following the discussion on the next stages of the negotiations, the Chair concluded that:

- the Council had taken note of the information provided by the Commission and the views expressed by the delegations on the latest developments as regards the state of play on the work of and prospects for the 10th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Nairobi;
- the Council had also taken note of the Commission's and the delegations' thinking on what might be acceptable in terms of the Nairobi Package and on the post-Nairobi activities;
- finally, the Council had highlighted the importance it attached to plurilateral negotiations ahead of the Ministerial Conference in Nairobi.

5. **EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations**

= State of play

The Commissioner reported to Ministers on the last round of negotiations held in the week beginning on 19 October 2015 and on the general state of play regarding the negotiations. She also informed Ministers about the work on facilitating access to certain classified documents concerning the TTIP.

Following the discussion, the Chair concluded that:

- the Council had considered the latest developments and the next steps in the TTIP negotiations. The coming months would be crucial to the success of these negotiations. The Council called on the Commission to redouble its efforts to achieve an ambitious outcome in all of the key areas of the negotiations;
- the Council had noted with satisfaction that the work on facilitating access to certain classified documents concerning the TTIP by creating reading rooms in Member State capitals was close to completion;
- the Council had expressed its positive appreciation for the Commission's approach to a new TTIP investment court system.

6. EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement negotiations

= State of play

The Commissioner briefed the Council on the potential for moving forward between now and the end of the year with a possible exchange of tariff offers with Mercosur. At this stage Mercosur could cover only 87% of trade instead of the 90% initially promised for this exchange of offers. The Commissioner also stated that the Commission had received new indications of political willingness on the part of Brazil and of Argentina following the outcome of the presidential election there.

The Commissioner also stressed the EU's commitment to a broad and comprehensive free trade agreement with Mercosur aimed also at eliminating non-tariff trade barriers and increasing trade.

The EEAS also asserted that, from a political and economic viewpoint, it was important to respond positively to Mercosur's requests.

Following the discussion, during which positions remained divided, the Chair concluded that:

- the Council had taken note of the information provided by the Commission and the External Action Service on the situation as regards the negotiations with Mercosur, in particular on the scope for moving forward between now and the end of the year with a possible exchange of offers;
- the Council had reaffirmed the importance it attached to the conclusion of a comprehensive and ambitious agreement with Mercosur that meets the EU's offensive and defensive interests. It had taken note of the views expressed by delegations, especially with regard to a possible exchange of offers on the basis of a reduced coverage of tariff lines, an issue on which delegations' positions remained divided.

7. **EU-Asia (Japan, ASEAN) negotiations**

= State of play

The Commissioner reported to the Council on the state of play of negotiations both on the free trade agreement with Japan, the ASEAN countries and India and on negotiations on an agreement on investment protection with Myanmar/Burma.

Following the discussion, the Chair concluded that:

- the Council had reaffirmed its support for the Commission in negotiating an ambitious and comprehensive free trade agreement with Japan, with the hope of concluding an agreement as swiftly as possible during 2016. High-level political contacts in the margin of the G20 meeting should lend a new impetus to these negotiations;
- the Council had raised the question of a possible resumption of bilateral negotiations with ASEAN, negotiations which must remain a medium-term strategic objective for the European Union. It had taken note of the other negotiations ongoing in the region;
- the Council had welcomed in particular the imminent initiation of negotiations on the free trade agreement with the Philippines, expressing the wish that these talks would culminate in an ambitious and comprehensive agreement.

8. Any other business

- **Trilateral talks between the European Union, the Russian Federation and Ukraine**
The Commissioner briefed the Council on the latest developments and the next steps in the trilateral talks between the European Union, Russia and Ukraine.

- **Steel sector crisis in the European Union and its trade implications**
14492/15 WTO 252 STIS 15
The Italian delegation expressed its concern at the critical situation in Europe's steel sector and at its implications and consequences for trade. In this regard Italy submitted a note (14492/15 WTO 252 STIS 15) listing possible solutions. Discussions on this item took place during lunch.

During lunch Ministers discussed the trade aspects of relations with China.
