



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 12 December 2019
(OR. en)

14423/19
ADD 1
LIMITE
PV CONS 64
RELEX 1087

DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Foreign Affairs/Trade)
21 November 2019

CONTENTS

Page

Non-legislative activities

3.	WTO reform and state of preparations for the 12th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference	3
4.	Trade relations with the US	3
5.	Implementation of trade agreements, including 3rd annual FTA Implementation report	3
6.	Any other business.....	3
	a) Results of 2019 Eurobarometer survey on international trade	
	b) Responsible Business Conduct	

Non-legislative activities

3. WTO reform and state of preparations for the 12th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference

State of play

The Council discussed the latest developments concerning the WTO reform process, as well as the state of preparations for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, including key priorities and possible deliverables. The Council expressed its broad support for the Commission's approach, as well as the determination to step up efforts for a successful outcome of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

The Council reiterated its serious concerns regarding the outstanding Appellate Body appointments. The EU should do everything possible to preserve binding dispute settlement in the WTO with an independent adjudicating body, which is essential for the multilateral rules-based trading system to be effective.

In this context, the Council welcomed a possible plurilateral approach to interim arrangements for binding dispute settlement, provided this does not compromise the EU's red-lines.

The Council also affirmed its determination to uphold and strengthen the multilateral trading system and do everything necessary to maintain the WTO's overall viability and functioning,

4. Trade relations with the US

State of play

The Council discussed the latest developments in EU-US trade relations and encouraged the Commission to continue pursuing a positive trade agenda as agreed by Presidents Juncker and Trump in July 2018.

As regards the Airbus/Boeing dispute, the Council regretted the choice of the US to move ahead with tariffs and reiterated that the EU offer of a negotiated solution remained on the table.

The Council noted that the US has not taken a final decision on Section 232 automotive tariffs, but reiterated that EU car imports are not a national security threat to the US. If the US were to impose car tariffs in the future, the EU's response would be firm and proportionate, in full compliance with WTO rules.

The EU remains united in its approach to trade relations with the US and ready to engage on the basis of a positive agenda.

5. Implementation of trade agreements, including 3rd annual FTA Implementation report

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Policy debate

On the basis of a third annual report prepared by the Commission, the Council discussed the implementation of EU FTAs.

The Council welcomed the Commission's efforts in this regard and considered that the discussion on how to improve implementation and enforcement should continue. The Council therefore invited the Trade Policy Committee to follow up on the main findings of the report and discuss further what could be done together to ensure that the full potential of EU trade agreements is met.

The Council will revert to this matter as and when appropriate.

6. Any other business

a) Results of 2019 Eurobarometer survey on international trade

Presentation by the Commission

Commissioner Malmström presented the main findings of the 2019 Eurobarometer survey on international trade.

b) Responsible Business Conduct

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Information from the Netherlands delegation

On the basis of its explanatory note, the Netherlands delegation raised some issues related to EU-level engagement on Responsible Business Conduct.