

AN AGREEMENT ON TRADE FACILITATION WOULD BENEFIT EVERYONE

Leading European business organisations working in trade policy appreciate that negotiations on Trade Facilitation in the WTO are progressing in the right direction and that a satisfactory agreement is within reach.

We encourage the EU and its WTO trading partners to persist in their Hong Kong Ministerial Commitment to achieve an ambitious deal on Trade Facilitation, and hope that this can represent a further drive towards a comprehensive and ambitious DDA agreement on all negotiating issues.

Trade Facilitation is seen as the simplification, standardisation, and automation of trade and customs procedures and associated information flows connected with the import and export of goods. It is not exclusively for goods, and due account should also be taken of linkages with other more services related activities, such as maritime and air transport and express delivery services.

The case for Trade Facilitation is recognised today by all WTO countries. Rapid and smooth movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit, reduced costs and improved legal certainty create benefits for business and consumers around the world, including developing countries. According to EU sources, Trade Facilitation measures would enable economic operators worldwide to save some 300 billion Euros per year. Moreover, Trade Facilitation promotes higher customs revenues for governments and reduces the impact of trade flows on the environment.

Trade Facilitation also feeds into the main development goals of the Doha Round, namely economic growth, welfare gains, poverty alleviation, better governance, and strengthened integration into the multilateral trading system. World Bank figures show that for more than 50% of South Asian, Sub-Saharan African and Latin American companies customs regulations are a significant obstacle to their business. And according to an ERT survey, 65% of European companies would look more favourably at new investments or added business activity in the markets concerned if trade facilitation was substantially improved.

An agreement on Trade Facilitation would be to the benefit of everyone. We therefore call upon members of the WTO Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation to clarify, in their forthcoming meetings in June and July, the terms of a binding Trade Facilitation Agreement that includes appropriate and stimulating “Special & Differential Treatment” for the poorest countries. Negotiators should ensure smooth cooperation between relevant International Organisations and propose efficient and targeted Technical Assistance for capacity building and implementation of the Agreement.



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