Press Conference on the 9th Round of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) Negotiations

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MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to the closing press conference of the TTIP round nine. This morning we'll have two presentations first by Dan Mullaney at USTR and then by Ignacio Garcia-Bercero from the European Commission. With no further ado, Dan Mullaney.

MR MULLANEY: Thank you very much, Trevor, and thank you all for coming out here today to have this briefing of the 9th round of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, or TTIP. We're very pleased to host our European colleagues here today, this week, in New York. This is the first time that the United States has hosted a TTIP round outside of Washington, D.C., and we did this in part so that we could get some new voices, fresh faces, and also to open the door to new media outlets and reporters, and I think we've succeeded in both of these goals. And in fact, we paused our talks yesterday for several hours to hear from many of those stakeholders, and I think I can speak for both Ignacio and myself when I say that we find the presentations we heard yesterday, that were both useful, as was the opportunity for our negotiators to discuss ideas with representatives from a wide range of stakeholder interests.

This type of engagement has, in fact, profoundly shaped our TTIP negotiating objectives and continues to guide us as we move forward in these negotiations. For example, we've heard the concern that this agreement should not require privatization of public services and that it should not limit the ability of governments to regulate these services – for example, to protect consumers, to protect the environment, and health, and safety.

Last month, in response to these concerns Ambassador Froman and the Trade Commissioner Malmstrom issued a joint public statement confirming that the United States and the European Union in their trade agreements, including in TTIP, do not prevent governments at any level from providing or supporting services in areas such as water, education, health, and social services, nor do they impede the ability of governments to adopt or maintain regulations to assure a high quality of services and to protect important public interest objectives, such as the protection of health, safety, or the environment. They also noted the important complementary function that the private sector can play in such areas.

Before I get into the details of this week's talks, I wanted to take a moment to recall why we're here, because as interested citizens and as, in fact, the negotiators themselves become increasingly and very appropriately focused on specific issues under discussion, it's important to remind ourselves of just what is at stake in this negotiation. We have in TTIP the best opportunity in a generation to build upon the U.S.-EU economic relationship. We already trade extensively and invest heavily in each other's economy. But we can make it easier. We can make sure that small business owners in Illinois and Italy can reach across the Atlantic to find new customers and to sell more. We can reduce the number of forms that are required at the border. We can reduce red tape. We can reduce the bureaucracy. And we can set an example for emerging economies that modern trade requires strong labor and environmental standards and that you don't have to sacrifice standards to create opportunity.

That is the best opportunity a modern trade agreement offers to our entrepreneurs, to our farmers, to our businesses, and to our consumers. We also have an opportunity in this negotiation to send a message to the rest of the world. First, we can reinforce the economic foundation of the world's most important political and security relationship – the one on which global prosperity and stability most depend. Second, we can ensure that the United States and the EU continue to provide the preeminent economic model for the global community. The United States remains firmly committed to these negotiations and the critical goal endorsed by our leaders just

late last year of making all possible progress towards an agreement this year.

And indeed, we made important progress this week in a number of key areas of the negotiations. For example, we had very productive engagement on some of the key regulatory areas. With respect to technical barriers to trade, we discussed ways in which we can reduce regulatory costs and burdens while continuing to achieve our respective high levels of consumer and environmental protection.

Our discussion included a review of a new U.S. proposal that would provide opportunities for U.S. exporters of products to the EU to have their products tested and certified in the United States and vice-versa. This is one example of how in TTIP we are seeking to reduce costs, eliminate duplicative testing requirements, and to set a model for third countries.

In regulatory coherence and transparency, we now have on the table a text that consolidates each side's proposals, and our negotiators are working this week to find areas of potential convergence. And in our discussion on sectors, negotiators and a range of regulators are at the table accomplishing the necessary technical work to achieve regulatory compatibility on a number of important sectors, including automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and medical devices.

Our negotiators on customs and trade facilitation continued their important work on identifying ways to limit unnecessary delays at the border, to eliminate red tape, and to facilitate the movement of goods across borders. Eliminating these types of barriers is not only important for streamlining the way exporters reach customers in Europe and in the United States, but also in pioneering new standards and practices for these procedures worldwide. This is critical because it impacts every business it sells goods across the Atlantic, and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises.

The U.S. and EU experts on the environment had useful exchanges this week on fisheries issues, including on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and how we might coordinate and enhance our cooperation on this and other issues – environmental issues – with chaired FTA partners. Our negotiators on small and medium-sized enterprises had the opportunity to meet this week with nearly 150 stakeholders, including dozens of U.S. and EU SMEs at the 6th U.S.-EU Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Workshop in Washington, D.C. In that workshop, SME executives from both sides of the Atlantic, together with U.S. and EU officials, discussed policy and business best practices in several areas, including barriers to trade that disproportionately impact small and medium-sized enterprises, and that could be addressed through the TTIP negotiations.

They discussed the need for user-friendly information on U.S. and EU product and trade requirements. They discussed significant growth of SME exports through ecommerce platforms, policies that can facilitate ecommerce, and SME finance instruments. In services and investment, we are working toward the tabling of ambitious second service offers before the next round as a result of the very constructive inter-sessional discussions between our ministers last month in Brussels. On tariffs, however, we are still working on a path forward to ambitious second tariff offers.

But across all negotiating groups, we're looking for ways to accelerate progress for the remainder of the year and we anticipate holding the 10th round before the summer break. We were also reminded this week, however, that we have more work to do. As Ambassador Froman mentioned on Wednesday, we were greatly disappointed by the European Commission's April 22nd proposal to amend EU legislation on genetically engineered food and feed products. Under the so-called opt-out proposal, EU member states would be permitted, individually, to ban the import or sale of biotech products that have been found to be safe for consumption and for the environment by EU scientific bodies. We're pleased that the commission is acting on longstanding biotech applications, but this does not remedy a proposal to allow EU member states to ban products being safe by Europe's own scientists. It's hard to square this proposal with either the EU's existing international obligations or their aspirations for a seamless internal market. We're still studying the proposal's implications but we hope that the EU will move forward in a way that respects our decades-old rules on trade.

I'd like to close by quoting Vice President Biden who in Munich this past February summed up the significance of our undertaking by saying, "Finalizing a deal like this is not easy, and it will not be easy, but it's necessary for our economies and our partnership to help shape the character of the global economy." TTIP can strengthen the global trading system to the benefit of people everywhere.

Thank you very much, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

MR BERCERO: Good morning, and it's a big pleasure to be here in New York, and I would like very much to thank Dan and the USTR team for their hospitality and for their very good organization of this round. Before I deliver my statement about what the work that we have been doing during this week, I would like to say a few words to clarify the proposal that was adopted this week by the European Commission on the authorization of GMOs for food and feed.

The first point which I would like to make is that the proposal changes nothing as regards the role that the

commission has in authorizing the imports or putting in the market of GMO food and feed, on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by the European Food Safety Agency. The proposal give the possibility for – to member states to opt out from the authorization of GMO foods or feeds on the basis of legitimate reasons which have to be unconnected with risks to human or animal health or the to the environment. It is a proposal which is fully consistent with our international obligations. Pending consideration of the proposal and its approval, the commission will continue to apply the rules as they are now, and indeed I would like to indicate that a little bit earlier today, 19 GMOs pending applications have been approved by the European Commission.

Now coming back to the business that we have been doing during this week, as Dan has indicated, this week has been dedicated to advancing our work on all the three areas of the negotiations; that is to say market access, regulatory issues, and rules. Most of the negotiating teams have met during this week. There have been a few exceptions. For instance, our teams on services, competition, rules of origin, and sustainable development did not have physical meetings, but in a number of cases they have other ways of interacting through DVCs, phone conversations, and further work inter-sessionally preparing for the next round.

I would like to underline that the discussion – in particular, the discussions that have been held this week on regulatory cooperation and on rules. These are areas where the negotiators have been specifically tasked to make as much progress as possible so as to prepare a joint political review after the summer. By enforcing regulatory cooperation in areas of shared interest and cutting overlapping and unnecessary red tape, we're safeguarding the standards of protection that we deem necessary for our citizens. It's expected to bring significant benefits to regulators, to businesses, and above all, to citizens. On regulatory issues, both have – sides have dedicated this week an enormous amount of time to detailed discussions, both on horizontal cooperation issues as well as nine specific sectors. I think Dan has already mentioned them, so I will not repeat it.

This is a time-consuming and resource-intensive exercise for regulators on both sides, but it is absolutely necessary. So if we want to achieve the results and if we want to be sure that regulators have the confidence to rely on the work which is done by the other.

On horizontal regulatory issues, detailed proposals have already been tabled from both sides in previous (inaudible). The teams have now started the work of trying step by step to identifying common ground, bringing our proposals closer together. The European Union objective on all horizontal chapters on regulatory issues, regulatory cooperation, TBT and SPS, is to find a practical framework for constructive cooperation between European and American regulators while fully respecting the regulatory procedures on both sides.

Fostering trans-Atlantic regulatory cooperation would help our regulators to identify and make use of possibilities for cooperation in a given area if and only if both sides identified a mutual interest in doing so.

On sectors, regulators have also continued (inaudible) discussions aimed at identifying concrete areas where we can achieve greater regulatory compatibility in a number of sectors. Just to give you a few examples, in the pharmaceutical sector, we have continued to review the scope to achieve mutual recognition of good manufacturing practices on the basis of intensive work which is being done by the regulators of both sides. In the car sector, work has intensified (inaudible) to look into the methodology and test cases to achieve equivalency of existing regulations. On medical devices, experts have exchanged views among other issues on the potential mutual recognition of quality management system (inaudible). We expect very much that regulators will intensify these technical exchanges in the next months, with a view to define in sufficient detail the regulatory outcomes that can be achieved in each of the nine sectors.

This week we have also (inaudible) the work on the rules area. We consider that an important element of TTIP should be the development of rules not only to govern our bilateral trade relationship but also as a contribution to global rules and standards in areas such as competition, energy and raw materials, sustainable development, just to name a few. We believe that if under TTIP we are able to construct ambitious outcomes that hopefully go beyond what we have done in our previous trade agreements, we will continue to be significant players in the development of global rules in the 21st century.

I would like to give you a few highlights of the work during this week. A significant step forward has been taken this week on the issue of energy and raw materials. Our teams have for the first time engaged extensively on all the elements that could be the surrogate of a specific energy and raw materials provisions in this agreement.

For instance, discussions have taken place about how TTIP could contribute to nondiscriminatory and transparent third-party access to transport infrastructures for energy routes, pipelines, and electricity grids, and examine how we can further intensify our regulatory cooperation to promote energy efficiency. We have not reached, of course, a conclusion about whether or not there should be a dedicated chapter on energy and raw materials in this agreement, but the detailed discussion held this week should contribute towards identifying the different common elements that could be a part of TTIP, and that help us to take that decision at a later stage.

Discussions have also continued this week on the issue on small and medium enterprises with a view to identify

how SME can benefit from the TTIP deal. While SMEs stand to benefit from all areas that are being discussed, our negotiators have also given particular attention to the SME chapter on how this can also bring particular benefits for the SME community. On the European side, we released this Monday a report based on a (inaudible) survey of nearly 900 European SMEs which identifies perceived obstacles for SMEs participating in transatlantic trade. This will be an important element in forming our negotiating position across all areas. What these surveys again showed is that regulatory issues are of particular importance for SMEs. And this week we also had more intensive discussions about those information tools that both sides could provide to SMEs within the context of the specific SME chapter.

In the area of customs and trade facilitation, where we are working on the basis of a common consolidated text, we are building on the good progress made in previous rounds. Negotiators have also discussed those elements that would allow enhanced cooperation between European and American custom officials, considering issues such as data requirements as an area where TTIP could bring important benefit for our traders, including for SMEs.

On sustainable development, experts continued their discussion (inaudible). As Dan has already indicated, we had the opportunity to share with the United States our experiences on how to combat illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing. The European Union is working towards presenting before the next negotiating round a textual proposal of sustainable development covering both labor and environmental aspects. We believe that this is an area where we, the United States and the European Union, should be able to develop an ambitious state-of-the-art approach that goes beyond our existing trade agreements and takes, of course, into account the feedback that we have received from our stakeholders.

I would also like to note that labor issues is an area where we cooperate with the United States. We also cooperate on third-country issues, and earlier today we released a joint statement relating to the implementation of the Bangladesh compact, which shows our commitment to work cooperatively on labor-related matters.

Finally, as regards the market access pillar, negotiators deepened their technical discussions aimed at reaching a better understanding of our respecting (inaudible) as well as on the issue of public procurement. Let me clarify that the reason why our services team did not meet this week is because, as you know, Commissioner Malmstrom and Ambassador Froman reached a common understanding at their meeting on 20th March identifying a path forward for discussion on these areas.

On that basis, service negotiators are working towards an exchange of revised offers in advance of the next round. Our revised services offers will also continue to reflect the commitment that was underlined in the joint statement issued on 20th March as regards public services. And Dan also referred to it in his statement.

I would like to thank you again – I would like to – sorry – to thank again all the stakeholders for the engagement during the stakeholder (inaudible). As usual, there were many important ideas that were put forward, and we will be looking to these as the negotiations progress.

Let me finish by giving you some perspective about the overall process ahead of us. As you know, earlier this year, negotiators received a clear political direction from Commissioner Malmstrom and Ambassador Froman to intensify our talks with a view to make as much progress as possible in 2015. We have proceeded on that basis by organizing intercessional discussions in a number of areas as well as by scheduling three comprehensive negotiating rounds during the first half of this year. We consider this work as an incremental step towards building the different components of this agreement.

After the summer period, technical discussions will continue on a regular basis, and we expect a political stock-taking early autumn, which will give us the steer for the next phase of the negotiations.

Finally, let me use this opportunity to confirm that the next formal negotiating round will take place in Brussels before the summer break. Thank you very much for your attention.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Now we'll have a little time for Q&A. If you would, please direct your questions to either Dan, both, or Ignacio. And there's two microphones floating around. So are there any questions?

Brian?

QUESTION: Brian Beary, the Washington correspondent for Europolitics. A question for Ignacio. Do you feel that the commission's decision on the GMOs, allowing the banning of GMOs for nonscientific reasons, has completely undermined the TTIP negotiations because such restrictions should be for a scientific basis only?

MR BERCERO: The simple answer is no. And as I have said very clearly in my statement, it is perfectly compatible with WTO rules to take measures for reasons other to those which are envisaged in the SPS agreement. Our proposal maintains fully the role of science in the risk assessment process, which would be the basis on which at the European level a decision would be taken on the authorization of GMOs. Our proposal gives the possibility to member states to take actions on the basis of other legitimate reasons. They cannot be related

to those which aren't covered by the EFSA risk assessment. And in any case, any measure that would be taken by the member states would be offered no discriminatory nature and the member states would have to analyze their compatibility with international obligations. So we feel that this is a proposal which is fully consistent with our international obligations and that in no way undermines our negotiations with the United States.

MODERATOR: David.

QUESTION: Hi. Dave Thomas with Inside U.S. Trade. Dan, I was wondering what is the, like, the U.S. reaction to the revised horizontal regulatory cooperation proposal that the EU tabled in this round. Will you be reaching out to state-level regulators and lawmakers to consult with them on this proposal?

And for Ignacio, it's to my understanding that the member states were worried about the burdens that the first proposal on regulatory cooperation would impose. Do you think you've addressed those concerns with this new proposal?

MR MULLANEY: Thanks, Dave, for the question. We're – the proposal was made this week at the – during this negotiating round. We spent time yesterday and will continue to spend time today discussing the proposal with – the new proposal with the European Union negotiators, and then we'll continue our next steps.

On the whole – on the broader regulatory coherence and transparency agenda, I mean, the overall goal in this area of regulatory coherence and transparency is to ensure as much as possible that future regulations between the United States and European Union don't diverge in ways that are unnecessary. And we feel that in this endeavor, the ability to encourage good regulatory practices in terms of publishing proposed regulations for public comment, opportunity for the public to comment and have their comments taken into account, and a degree of accountability on the part of regulators can help create both better regulations and also less divergent regulations.

MR BERCERO: The fundamental objective that we are pursuing to – on regulatory cooperation is to facilitate cooperation between regulators on those areas where there's a mutual interest to explore how to achieve greater regulatory compatibility. It is very much based on the principal cooperation where both sides find there is a mutual interest to do so. It would be, from our point of view, not satisfactory to exclude cooperation in areas which are regulated by the member states or which are regulated by the states in the U.S. since in certain sectors, in certain areas, important regulatory powers are vested at the lower level of government. But of course, that cooperation has to be done in a very flexible manner, has to be done in full respect with the legal and institutional setting of each of the two parties.

And one of the things that our proposal makes very clear, it is always going to depend on the interest of the state-level or member state regulators to cooperate, and it's those regulators who would be in the driving seat in any such regulation. Of course, our proposal have been presented after full consultation with our member states, as is the case for any of our proposals, and we hope that we have struck the right balance. Our proposal will soon become public. As you know, we always make our proposals public shortly after they have been presented in a negotiating round. So I think at some point in time next week it will be publicly available.

QUESTION: Hi. I am Idoya Noain from El Periodico from Barcelona. To Dan, I wanted to ask two things precisely about this transparency and making the documents public. There's so much criticism that the United States is not doing the same. I don't know if there's any idea of doing public – the documents. Then how do you think the negotiation on the – on Congress of the fast track authority of the PTT can affect these negotiations that you're having?

And to Ignacio also, I think there's voices in the European community asking to exclude chemicals from the treaty. I don't know if there has been any advance on – if they are going to be excluded or included or – thank you.

MR MULLANEY: Thank you for the question. Transparency is extremely important to us, and the Administration has put a huge emphasis on laying out very precisely what our objectives are in this negotiation. We laid out those objectives at the outset of the negotiation. We refreshed and elaborated them this past fall, and we continue to engage with all interested stakeholders on what it is we're negotiating, what it is we're not negotiating, and making sure that we take into account those views.

So we put a heavy emphasis on transparency and a maximum of dialogue with all of the stakeholders, including civil society, small business, large business. We are not publicly issuing our text proposals, and this is because we do want to give our negotiators scope to negotiate an agreement at the same time as we encourage a maximum amount of transparency. So we're striking a balance between openness and transparency and engaging in dialogue, and allowing our negotiators scope to negotiate.

With respect to the Trade Promotion Authority, you probably know as well as I do that process is moving through Congress. I can't speculate as to the ultimate timing or the outcome, but the President called for Trade Promotion Authority in the State of the Union Address, and we're looking very much forward to having that authority as an

important step in this process.

MR BERCERO: The chemical sector – it is well known that the regulations in the European Union and in United States – they are a bit different, and that's the reason why both of us have been saying that from the very beginning of this discussion, that the aim cannot be harmonization, that the aim cannot be mutual recognition, that the aim should be to identify practical steps in which the regulators can cooperate by sharing data, by comparing their own procedures on risk assessment, by looking into some very technical issues like labeling, but nothing that could in any way undermine the implementation of our respective regulatory regime on chemicals.

This does not mean exclusion at all. I mean, the ideas would be that as we frame the specific provisions on chemicals within this agreement, we would need to be particularly careful that these parameters which I have just mentioned are fully respected.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Mario Villar with Agencia EFE from Spain. For Ignacio, in the past few weeks, we've seen big protests in – across Europe against these negotiations. Are these impacting in any way the process? Or what is the European Commission taking from these people that have taken to the streets?

MR BERCERO: Well, obviously, the European Commission is fully aware that this agreement is an agreement which gives rise to different views. We think the European Union – we believe the right response is to continue with our policy of transparency, of engagement. We have always been open to discuss with anyone about this agreement, including those which are opposed to the agreement. And we believe that what we need to have is a good, rational debate about these negotiations, and we will continue to be fully, fully engaged in that discussion.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks. Ben Hancock from Inside U.S. Trade. Dan, I wanted to ask you about the proposal that you said you made this week on TBT. You said that that would allow for, I think, manufacturers – but correct me where I'm wrong – to certify a product in the United States and then ship it to the EU without having to be tested again. Can you just explain how it works now and how this would be different?

I guess for Ignacio, I wanted to ask about services. I know you didn't talk about services this week, but you do have an agreement to table before the end of the summer. Are you going to be changing your approach to the services offer, or is the U.S. going to change their approach to the services offer, or are you both going to keep talking past each other on that? Thanks.

MR MULLANEY: Thanks, Ben. For the – with respect to the technical barriers to trade, I mean, one of our main objectives in this negotiation is to find ways to reduce costs to exporters, to manufacturing in doing trade with the other side. And one of the significant costs we have is requirements for many products that they be tested in the United States for the U.S. market, tested in Europe for the European market, and how this duplicative testing creates unnecessary costs for the manufacturer, ultimately for the consumer, doesn't really contribute to a higher level of protection.

And so this is an area where if we can reduce or eliminate the amount of duplicative testing – to the same high standards, but eliminate the duplicative testing – this is a significant benefit I think we can bring to exporters to increase exports, to regulators who can focus their resources on – in areas where it matters, and ultimately to the consumer, who benefits from strong regulatory protections but accomplished in a more efficient manner.

With respect to the services offer, Ambassador Froman and Commissioner Malmstrom spoke last month in Washington about making progress toward ambitious services offers on both sides. I think that's what we're going to achieve, and ideally before the next round. What we're looking for is for us to converge more towards the most ambitious services obligations that either of us have had in trade agreements.

QUESTION: Does that mean a negative list (inaudible)?

MR BERCERO: Do you want to answer (inaudible)?

MR MULLANEY: Yes, yes.

MODERATOR: He does? Okay.

MR BERCERO: Okay. Well, first a word about conformity assessment. Reduction of the costs of conformity assessment is also an imporant objective for the European Union. Some of our industries, including in particular (inaudible), often raise concerns about the high cost of conformity assessment in the United States, particularly in some sectors like machinery and engineering. So certainly, we also have an interest in seeing what can be done to reduce the cost of conformity assessment. Our approach is not necessarily the same one which is advocated by United States, but I think there is a lot of ongoing discussions to try to see how one can find something that works effectively for both sides.

On the issue of services, yes, I think there was a political understanding about how we would be moving forward

towards the change in revised services offered. This includes also an understanding about the scheduling technique, if you want, about how this is going to be done. I'm not going to enter into the labeling of the name. The thing is that at the end of the day, we both have a common way of scheduling the – our reservations on market access and national treatment, which implies some combination of positive list and negative list. And I think we would find – we have found a way forward to change offers on that basis.

QUESTION: Question for – I'm not – whoever wants to answer – on the regulatory coherence. If I understood correctly, there's now a consolidated proposal. As part of that consolidated proposal, does it now include that the commission will publish draft proposals? Because that was one thing the U.S. side was asking, that – publish them for comment before finally presenting their proposals.

MR BERCERO: A consolidated (inaudible) proposal simply means that both sides have made a proposal on the issues and that the two proposals have been put together. It doesn't imply that any of the two sides has changed its position on individual topics. And our position on the issue of a stakeholder consultation is reflected in our proposal, which is public, available, which makes clear that, yes, there are opportunities for a stakeholder consultation, but these are of a different nature to those that take place in United States under the Administrative Procedure Act.

What I think is important is that at this point in time, I think that both sides have a common view that we need to be able to negotiate on these issues of regulatory coherence and cooperation, covering both what is – what are called good regulatory practices like a stakeholder consultation, the impact assessment; and regulatory cooperation, because I think – those, I think, are the two components about what we are trying to achieve in this horizontal chapter. Our current proposal covers both issues. For the time being, the proposal of the United States is more focused on good regulatory practices, but my understanding is that there is going to be a willingness by both sides to engage on both aspects of the regulatory coherence chapter.

QUESTION: Okay.

MODERATOR: Time for one more question.

QUESTION: Sorry. Yesterday on the stakeholder, somebody complained that the financing sector has been out of the conversations for – since the fifth round. I don't know if it's going to come back, if it's there and we don't know it.

MR MULLANEY: Well, I mean, financial service is obviously a critical part of our trade agreements, and we will as a part of the services discussion engage in significant obligations with respect to financial services, market access, and other aspects. When it comes to financial services regulatory cooperation, the United States and Europe have robust dialogues that occur in numerous bilateral and multilateral fora, and our view is that those fruitful conversations should continue in those fora alongside and in parallel to TTIP.

MR BERCERO: Just perhaps one word. I mean, first, this week there has been no discussion on financial services. There have been no discussion on services in general. Now, it is well known that from the European point of view, we consider it would be appropriate to also have within the framework of TTIP a number of principles to facilitate regulatory cooperation on the financial services sector. This is not the perspective of the United States. We are engaged in having discussions to see how we can try to find a way to bring this issue forward, but I don't think we have yet reached the point in which we have a common understanding on that topic.

MODERATOR: The last question.

QUESTION: Vasili Sushko from Sputnik News. I have a question regarding yesterday's stakeholder forum. I just wanted to know how the presentation was documented and how the information presented will be forwarded to the appropriate parties. For example, yesterday at the Hilton there were several presentations regarding GMOs – some in favor of the practice, but many interesting presentations made some points showing the dangers behind them. I'm curious if these presentations, particularly the ones that were critical of the use of GMOs, are going to be considered at these negotiations moving forward and how they will be considered. Because looking in the room, the few U.S. representatives that I saw appeared somewhat maybe unattentive, giggling at times in between presentations, during presentations. I mean, I can't imagine that these are the individuals that are going to be making these decisions in regard to this agreement.

That being said, how will the information presented yesterday actually make it to the appropriate parties?

MR MULLANEY: Yeah, thank you. Very, very good question. The stakeholder presentations are an opportunity for stakeholders to come and present their views to other stakeholders and to the negotiators. I myself was at several of the presentations on biotechnology. I heard the views on both sides. I think I and our leads on the agricultural issues, who also attended those stakeholder sessions, were very appreciative of hearing both views.

As we have these conversations, the – you have the lead negotiators there at the stakeholder events, have the

opportunity then to ask questions, to have discussions, and they are working the views that they hear and the discussions they have into their discussions at the table. So you have direct stakeholder-to-negotiator – and in many cases several negotiators – dialogue on the very issues that these stakeholders care about.

In terms of documentation, I think the stakeholders are always free to send to us their PowerPoints or their presentations or any papers that they have, which will be circulated among the negotiators and others who – with an interest. But the stakeholder session itself is intended to be an opportunity for a presentation of views and exchanges of views between the negotiators and the stakeholders.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, everyone. That concludes our press conference.

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