

U.S. Press Statement at the Close of the T-TIP Round in Brussels

U.S. Press Statement at the Close of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Negotiating Round in Brussels

February 26, 2016

Brussels, Belgium

As Delivered

First of all, let me express my thanks to Ignacio and his European Commission colleagues for graciously hosting us during the 12th round of T-TIP negotiations here in Brussels. We really appreciate all they did to facilitate the progress we achieved this week.

When Ambassador Froman and EU Trade Commissioner Malmstrom met in Washington last September to review the status of the negotiations, they agreed on the need to accelerate work in all areas with goal of completing T-TIP in 2016. They met several times since then to ensure forward movement.

Our intensified engagement over the past few months – during which many of our negotiators have been in almost daily contact with their EU counterparts – has yielded real progress: We now have proposed text in the vast majority of the negotiating areas. And in many cases, we are already removing brackets and agreeing on wording. In short, we are well past the nitty-gritty of negotiating this agreement.

This round comes just three weeks after the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We look forward to concluding a similarly high standard agreement with the European Union.

Two of the texts that we put forward this round were on labor and the environment. These proposals underscore our commitment to promote our high labor and environmental objectives in T-TIP.

Just as in our previous trade agreements, we propose making adherence to labor and environmental standards enforceable in T-TIP, which we believe strengthens those protections.

We believe that T-TIP also has the potential to increase transatlantic cooperation in addressing labor and environmental challenges more generally, to the benefit of all of our citizens and people around the world.

We made significant advances in the regulatory area during the round. Our goal in T-TIP – which makes it one of the most ambitious trade agreements in history – is to bridge, where possible, regulatory divergences and promote greater regulatory compatibility – all without lowering the environmental, health and safety protections that our citizens have come to expect.

At our meetings this week we advanced our discussions of regulatory cooperation and good regulatory practices with the goal of strengthening transparent rule-making on both sides of the Atlantic.

Public comment and input reinforce the democratic legitimacy of our regulatory systems without diminishing parliamentary control over those processes.

We also this week continued our discussions on regulatory issues in important sectors such as energy, pharmaceuticals, and

areas.

The cross-cutting goal in all of these sectors, and in fact more generally, is to improve regulatory compatibility in ways that reduce unnecessary burdens on trade, while maintaining existing levels of regulatory protection and making better use of regulator resources.

Our work on identifying common objectives builds on years of information and data exchange, studies and in-depth discussions among regulators and negotiators during these negotiations. Our efforts in the regulatory area have potential to achieve significant benefits.

The United States during this round also put forward substantive proposals on customs and trade facilitation, on sanitary phytosanitary measures, and on rules of origin.

The goal of our efforts in these areas is to simplify customs procedures, to cut unnecessary red tape, to ensure that health and safety regulations are based on science and to make certain that the benefits of T-TIP go mainly to those who create value within the transatlantic area.

In October during our last round, we had a second exchange of tariff offers in which both sides agreed to liberalize 97% of their tariff lines, most of them immediately upon entry into force of the agreement.

This is a good start, but the United States remains committed to the goal of eliminating transatlantic tariffs under T-TIP. We look forward to working with the European Union in the coming months to achieve that objective.

Meanwhile, during this week we have already begun discussing how we can reduce the phase-out periods for those tariff lines that are not yet scheduled for immediate elimination.

Finally, we plan on an initial exchange of offers on government procurement early next week, and will have discussions thereafter.

We still have a lot of work to do, but if we can sustain our current intensified engagement, we can finish the negotiations this year.

Our common goal is to reach by July an advanced stage of text consolidation across the board, narrowing down our differences to the most sensitive issues and putting us in a position potentially to complete the agreement in the second half of the year.

The economic and strategic rationale for T-TIP has only grown stronger since we started negotiations 2-1/2 years ago.

T-TIP gives Europe and the United States the opportunity, together, to help shape the global rules for trade and investment in a way that reflects our common values and interests, to be the standard-setters rather than the standard-takers.

Let me be clear: We want to finish this year, but we do not favor an "early harvest" or a "T-TIP light." We want an ambitious, comprehensive and high standard agreement. And the United States remains committed to doing its part to accomplish

