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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3440th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Trade issues

Brussels, 15, 16, 17 and 18 December 2015

President **Romain Schneider**
Minister for Social Security, Minister for Development
Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs and Minister for
Sport

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED**10th WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**– *First set of conclusions*

Meeting on 15 December 2015 at the opening of the WTO's 10th ministerial conference, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. In line with the EU's new trade and investment policy, the Council reiterates that the EU remains fully committed to a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system and supports the further strengthening of the multilateral system, including dispute settlement as one of its central pillars, on the basis of a robust and effective WTO that responds to current and future global trade challenges, and which better reflects the capacities of other WTO members to contribute to the system. The EU is committed to exploring ways to make the negotiating arm of the multilateral trading system work better in the future.
2. A successful WTO Ministerial Conference (MC10) in Nairobi with concrete, balanced and meaningful outcomes and an agreement to continue negotiations on remaining issues of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and to consider the addition of new items in the WTO negotiating agenda will be important to foster trust and confidence in the multilateral trading system. To this end, the EU calls on all WTO members to concentrate on those issues that are realistically achievable in Nairobi.
3. Following the positive achievements of the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in 2013 and the ratification by the EU of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the EU now expects other WTO partners which have not yet done so to fulfil all the required procedural steps without delay, so that companies, in particular in developing countries, can experience the tangible benefits of the TFA as soon as possible.
4. The Council recalls that the EU had been leading efforts aimed at preparing a comprehensive outcome on key elements of the Doha Development Agenda in time for MC10. Unfortunately this could not be achieved. In this context, the Council welcomes the EU efforts towards a balanced and comprehensive outcome on all forms of export support in agriculture (export subsidies, export credits, agriculture exporting State Trading Enterprises and food aid) as a response to the long-standing demands and to the benefit of many countries, notably developing and least-developed countries.
5. The EU remains committed to a positive outcome on development and transparency in the WTO. The Council highlights the progress achieved on the development aspects, ahead of the MC10, in particular the Decision by the TRIPS Council on 6 November 2015 regarding the extension until at least 1 January 2033 of the transitional period concerning certain obligations related to pharmaceutical products for LDCs, the submission by the EU regarding the LDC Services waiver on 18 November, and a possible solution on preferential rules of origin for LDCs, which would provide for a meaningful contribution to the development package for the Conference.

6. The EU warmly welcomes the accession of Liberia and Afghanistan to the WTO and recalls its commitment to support the accession of LDCs to the WTO in accordance with the relevant WTO guidelines.
7. The EU looks forward to the conclusion of the negotiations on the revised Information Technology Agreement (ITA), and to further progress on the list of products under the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA), given the expected contribution of these agreements to stronger global trade and to more growth and jobs in the EU and beyond, and as building blocks for future multilateral agreements.
8. The Council supports the Commission in its efforts in order to make the Conference a success. It will assess the progress made with a view to reaching a balanced outcome in line with the conditions set out above. To this end, the Council looks forward to the Commission's proposals for EU negotiating positions on draft texts discussed within the WTO. It also looks forward to the submission by the Commission of the WTO negotiated texts for Council approval on behalf of the EU before their final adoption by the WTO bodies."

– *Second set of conclusions*

Meeting on 19 December 2015, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council was informed by the Commission of latest developments in the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference. It shared the Commission's assessment of the overall package and welcomed the conclusion of the negotiations on the revised Information Technology Agreement.
2. In the absence of final texts, the Council agreed that the EU's position joining the consensus in the Ministerial meeting would be presented to the WTO and reflected in the written conclusions of the Conference, on the understanding that the EU will follow up the results of the Ministerial Meeting in accordance with its internal procedures and without prejudice to the division of competencies between the EU and its Member States."

[WTO webpage on the outcome of the 10th ministerial conference](#)

OTHER BUSINESS

– *Crisis in the European steel industry*

The Council discussed challenges facing the European steel industry stemming from a fall in world demand.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

TRADE POLICY

EU-Canada trade negotiations

The Council decided to declassify the directives given to the Commission to negotiate a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Canada.

The 2009 negotiating directives, as well as a 2011 modification to allow for talks on investment protection, were made public on 15 December 2015, the same day as the decision.

The draft agreement was finalised at an EU-Canada summit in September 2014. Legal scrubbing and translation are underway, with a view to signature, ratification and conclusion.

The agreement will remove over 99% of import tariffs in both Canada and the EU. It will create sizeable new market access opportunities in services and investment. It includes provisions on government procurement, investment protection, intellectual property rights, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, geographical indications, sustainable development, regulatory cooperation, mutual recognition, trade facilitation, cooperation on raw materials, dispute settlement and technical barriers to trade, amongst others.

The decision was taken by common accord.

DECISION TAKEN BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE

Western Balkans - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Trade measures

On 16 December 2015, the Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 1215/2009 on exceptional trade measures for the Western Balkans and suspending its application with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina ([PE-CONS 67/1/15 REV 1](#)).

Adoption of the text follows an agreement with the European Parliament, which approved it at first reading on 16 December 2015.