

# BRIDGES WEEKLY

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## PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

### Trans-Pacific Talks Advance, Amid Speculation over Japan Entry

Talks for a proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement have "intensified," negotiators announced today after a ten-day session in Singapore, ahead of the impending end-year deadline that members have set for clinching a deal. Japan, meanwhile, is expected to soon state its intention to join the 11-country group, with an announcement possible as early as this Friday.

The 4-13 March talks, which marked the TPP negotiations' 16<sup>th</sup> round, saw "solid progress" in the areas of regulatory coherence, telecommunications, and customs and development, according to the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry, which hosted the discussions. Negotiators have said that they will return to these areas closer to the finalisation of the overall deal.

However, other areas – such as intellectual property, environment, competition and labour – are likely to pose more challenges, the Singapore ministry conceded.

Intellectual property has long been a contentious topic in the negotiations, particularly due to some proposals that would involve stronger patent and data protection. Other subjects that observers expect to be difficult as the talks move forward include rules on state-owned enterprises, agriculture, and textiles, given the competing interests of some of the TPP parties in these areas.

TPP countries have repeatedly said that they hope to conclude negotiations for the so-called "21<sup>st</sup> century agreement" by the end of this year, after having abandoned an earlier goal of inking a deal by December 2012. Some have even floated the idea of finalising the talks in time for the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting in Bali, Indonesia this October.

With the 2013 deadline in their sights, negotiators have said that they are making a concerted push to conclude the talks in time. "There was a distinct sense that negotiations were shifting gears," Ng Bee Kim – Singapore's chief negotiator and the Director-General of Trade at the ministry – said today.

The TPP currently includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the US, and Vietnam as members. All eleven are part of the 21-country APEC group.



International Centre for Trade  
and Sustainable Development

### **Japan announcement in the pipeline?**

Meanwhile, speculation has been rife in recent weeks over whether Japan might soon announce its intention to join the talks. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has spent the past month working to shore up political support in Tokyo for the 11-country negotiations both with his own party – the Liberal Democratic Party – and its coalition partner, the New Komeito.

Having received a cautiously positive response from both parties so far, Abe is now expected to make an announcement as early as this Friday, according to Japanese media reports.

The Japanese Prime Minister, who took office in late December after a landslide election victory, also recently met with US President Barack Obama to discuss the prospect of joining the trans-Pacific negotiations. (See Bridges Weekly, [27 February 2013](#)) At the time, the two sides agreed that Tokyo would not be required to unilaterally eliminate tariffs as a condition for entry, and that there may be room for addressing some sensitivities that the US and Japan each have – specifically, automobiles for the former, and agriculture for the latter.

Since then, Japanese news sources have reported that Tokyo is indeed preparing to make automobile concessions to the US in order to join the 11-country negotiations. Specifically, Japan would allow the US to keep its 2.5 percent tariff on passenger cars for at least five years, and a 25 percent tariff on trucks for a minimum of a decade, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun.

In exchange, Washington may be willing to yield some ground on agriculture, which is a particularly contentious subject in Tokyo, sources told the news agency. Farmers in Japan have long protested against joining the pact, concerned that import tariffs on some agricultural products – particularly rice, which faces an over 700 percent tariff – could be slashed as a result of the negotiations.

However, even if an announcement is indeed made this week, TPP negotiators have said that bringing Tokyo officially on board will take some time. Not only do all TPP members have to agree on extending an invitation to any new countries, but they will also have to complete their necessary domestic procedures in order for new members to formally participate in the discussions.

"I don't think we're looking at Japan specifically coming on board in Lima," Ng told reporters earlier today, referring to the upcoming round of negotiations that will be held in the Peruvian capital in May.

### **Others set to join?**

The TPP has long been seen as a stepping stone toward a broader deal that would encompass all 21 members of the APEC group, in what some have termed a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. While growing the TPP's membership will be key toward reaching that goal, current TPP participants have cautioned in the past that bringing new countries onto the deal could pose the risk of slowing the negotiations.

At least two countries, besides Japan, are reportedly eyeing the possibility of becoming TPP members. Thailand has already said that it is interested in joining the 11-country group, with Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra announcing last November that Bangkok will be seeking entry. (See Bridges Weekly, [21 November 2012](#))

Thailand will still need to complete its own domestic procedures and gain the approval of TPP members to formally join the talks.

The Philippines is also rumoured to be interested in joining the negotiations, with US Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs José Fernández meeting with Manila officials to discuss the subject last month.

US National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, in a speech in Washington on Monday, reaffirmed that increasing the membership of the trans-Pacific talks is a key priority for the Obama Administration.

"The centrepiece of our economic rebalancing is the Trans-Pacific Partnership," he [said](#). "We always envisioned the TPP as a growing platform for regional economic integration. Now, we are realising that vision – growing the number of TPP partners from seven when President Obama took office to four more: Vietnam, Malaysia, Canada, and Mexico."

The US official also addressed concerns that such a high-level agreement might be difficult to finalise. "The TPP is also attractive because it is ambitious but achievable," Donilon said. "We can get this done."

### **Next steps**

Ministers from the TPP countries are next expected to meet on the sidelines of the upcoming gathering of APEC trade ministers, which is slated to be held in Surabaya, Indonesia on 20-21 April.

The next round of TPP negotiations, meanwhile, is scheduled for 15-24 May in Lima, Peru.

ICTSD reporting; "Tokyo makes auto concessions/U.S. to maintain tariffs on Japanese vehicle imports for 5-10 yrs," THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN, 7 March 2013; "Thai, the Philippines keen to join TPP talks," BUSINESS TIMES, 28 February 2013; "Pacific trade talks make progress, any Japan entry not quick," REUTERS, 13 March 2013.

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## AGRICULTURE

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# EU Parliamentarians Approve Farm Policy Reforms

In a plenary session earlier today, European parliamentarians voted on proposals for reform of the EU's controversial Common Agricultural Policy, in the latest step towards defining the shape of the post-2013 farm subsidy framework.

"Today we have struck a proper balance between food security and improved environmental protection, so that the new EU farm policy can deliver even more public goods to EU citizens," the parliament's Agriculture Committee chair Paolo De Castro said following the vote.

He added that the new scheme "must be made less bureaucratic and fairer to farmers, not least to empower them to cope with crises."

The plenary vote rejected certain aspects proposed by the parliament's agriculture committee, reverting in some areas to measures initially put forward by the European Commission, while maintaining other measures that the agriculture committee had recommended. (See Bridges Weekly, [30 January 2013](#))

While environmentalists, development groups, and others had called for the reform to reorient farm support around environmental protection, farm lobbies argued in favour of retaining historical subsidy levels while minimising new "green" requirements.

The EU farm group COPA-COGECA broadly welcomed the vote. Copa President Gerd Sonnleitner said in a [statement](#) that the decision is "a good basis to work on and marks a key step forward in the EU decision process."

### **"Re-coupling" support to production?**

The plenary vote maintained a proposal from the parliament's agriculture committee to allow EU member states to provide "coupled" farm payments, where subsidies are linked to the type or volume of production, up to 15 percent of the "national envelope" available to the government. The move would allow larger amounts of trade-distorting support to be provided across all farm sectors, said sources familiar with the process.

Some farm groups expressed concern about the move. "We were hoping it would be brought down a bit," said William Surman, a Brussels-based spokesperson for the UK farm group NFU. He told Bridges that the coupled payments disadvantaged more competitive farmers by distorting markets.

Public health groups expressed particular concern over the possibility that tobacco producers could benefit from coupled payments. "People living in Europe expect politicians capable to withstand narrow interest groups and stand up to protect their health and well-being," said Monika Kosińska, Secretary General of European Public Health Alliance, in a [statement](#).

### **Weaker "greening" measures maintained**

The plenary vote also maintained the agriculture committee's proposals to introduce more flexible "greening" measures as a condition for farmers to receive direct payments, and for these to be voluntary.

Instead of protecting "ecological focus areas" equivalent to seven percent of farmland, as originally proposed by the European Commission, the plenary accepted proposals put forward by the agriculture committee that would begin from a lower level of three percent in the first year, followed by gradual increases and a review. (See Bridges Weekly, [30 January 2013](#))

However, environmentalists welcomed a move to tighten rules on which farmers could be considered "green by definition." While the Commission had proposed that only organic farmers would be covered by this clause, the agriculture committee had sought to expand the category to cover a menu of other farm practices - a move rejected by the plenary.

"The European Parliament has defused some of the worst counter reform proposals that came out of the Agriculture Committee, but has managed only partial damage control," [argued](#) Trees Robijns, Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe.

### **Double-funding: plenary rejects paying farmers twice over**

The plenary vote overturned a change introduced by the agriculture committee that would, in effect, have obliged the EU to pay farmers twice for the same environmental action - a clause that some argued would be illegal under the bloc's own rules, as well as inefficient.

The double payment would have arisen as a result of the subsidies farmers receive under future direct payments that would be linked to environmental performance, as well as those they receive under agri-environment schemes that are funded separately.

A number of MEPs issued statements welcoming the move by the plenary to modify the proposed new rules in this area.

### **Production quotas: sugar extended, dairy to end**

The plenary vote approved the proposal from the agriculture committee to maintain sugar quotas until 2020 - although the Commission had favoured ending them five years sooner.

In contrast, dairy quotas would not be extended beyond 2015, although some MEPs had reportedly sought to phase them out more slowly. The vote approves proposals put forward by both the Commission and the parliament's agriculture committee.

### **Export subsidies maintained**

Despite an opinion from the parliament's development committee which had called for agricultural export subsidies to be phased out (see Bridges Weekly, [27 June 2012](#)), the plenary maintained the possibility of using this instrument under the policy's next seven-year cycle.

Some MEPs expressed their frustration with the move, with the Dutch Green agriculture spokesperson Bas Eickhout observing that "MEPs regrettably voted to maintain the damaging export refunds instrument which dumps EU farm products onto fragile markets in developing countries."

### Cap on payments to large farms

The plenary vote maintained a proposal that would cap subsidy payments to the largest farms. Successive attempts to introduce similar caps in previous rounds of CAP reform have been unsuccessful, although the agriculture committee this time supported a bid from the Commission to introduce a new ceiling for payments.

While the move has been supported by socialist MEPs in particular, some continue to argue that the proposals on the table would be weak and largely ineffective.

"Capping direct payments to any one farm at €300,000 is too high and means continuation of unfair distribution of public funds to big players," cautioned Karin Ulmer, senior policy officer at the development agency APRODEV, in an email to Bridges.

### Next steps

Under co-decision rules agreed under the EU's Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament, European Commission, and ministers in the European Council must all reach agreement on the reforms before they can be finalised and adopted.

Farm ministers from the bloc's member states are due to meet to discuss the CAP reform process on Monday and Tuesday next week.

Farm groups expressed hope that an early accord could be found. "I urge EU farm ministers next week to agree their position on the new CAP so that negotiations can commence between MEPs, EU farm ministers, [and] the EU Commission to reach a final agreement by June," Sonnleitner [said](#).

A [press release](#) from the European Parliament said that the three-way negotiations would begin in late March or early April.

ICTSD reporting.

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## PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

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# Preparations Underway for Launching Trans-Atlantic Trade Talks

A month after announcing that they would be pursuing a bilateral trade and investment agreement, the EU and US have begun preparations for the formal launch of trade talks, which many expect by summer. While the European Commission announced yesterday that it now has an agreed draft mandate for the negotiations, US officials – including President Barack Obama – have similarly continued working over the past few weeks to shore up domestic support for the trans-Atlantic pact.

The draft mandate agreed by the European Commission yesterday is one of the first steps that Brussels needs to complete in order to launch the planned trade negotiations, which EU and US leaders had announced last month. (See Bridges Weekly, [13 February 2013](#)) The mandate will next require approval by the European Council – made up of the heads of state or government of the EU's 27 members, along with the Council and Commission presidents – before the EU can officially begin talks with the US.

"I am very pleased that just one month after the announcement by the EU and the US to go for this 'game-changing' trade deal, the European Commission is ready with a proposed mandate for the future negotiations," European Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht [said](#) upon presenting the news. "We can now roll up our sleeves up and get down to the business of preparing negotiations."

Washington, meanwhile, is expected to soon start its own internal processes for launching the trade negotiations in the coming days or weeks. Specifically, the Obama Administration will need to formally notify Congress of its intent to launch the talks, a procedural step that will kick off a required 90-day consultation period with lawmakers before the White House can officially begin trade negotiations.

### **"Heavy slog" ahead, officials warn**

The decision to launch trade talks came following months of speculation over whether the two sides would be willing to address long-standing differences on issues such as regulations and standards – subjects that observers say will be key in deepening their already strong trade ties. However, both sides have also repeatedly declared that the talks are likely to be difficult, and that any deal must be concluded quickly in order to be effective.

Obama, speaking on Tuesday to the President's Export Council – his main advisory committee on international trade – noted that, given the current global economic climate, previous hurdles posed by EU member states in areas such as agriculture might now be easier to overcome.

"What I think has changed is the recognition throughout Europe that it is hard for them to figure out a recipe for growth at this point, in part because of the austerity measures that have been put in place throughout the eurozone, in the absence of a more aggressive trade component," Obama [said](#). "So I think they are hungrier for a deal than they have been in the past."

However, he qualified, the process is still likely to be "a heavy slog."

"There's no guarantee that in the end some of the countries that have been hard cases in the past won't block it again, but I think that you're going to see more pressure from more countries on the other side of the Atlantic to get this done than we've seen in the past," he explained.

Obama also urged US lawmakers and industry officials present at the meeting to back the deal on their side, noting that their support is similarly critical to the negotiation's success.

EU officials – while also backing the proposed pact – have also alluded to the difficulties that could come in getting all 27 of the bloc's member states to sign off on a deal, even with its potential benefits.

"We have an enormous opportunity to create a common market of 800 million people," Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament – which will ultimately have to ratify any deal agreed between Washington and Brussels – said last week in comments reported by Reuters. "The parliament, from a point of principle, is very much in favour of a free trade agreement with the United States."

However, he qualified that reaching a deal by November 2014 – the goal date that De Gucht has outlined for ending negotiations – might be difficult, given some of the sensitive issues that the talks will have to address.

"I think the Commission and Parliament are capable of reaching a broad agreement," he said. "But you have to consider the individual European member states."

A recent [study](#), prepared for the European Commission by the London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research, has placed the potential gains of a Brussels-Washington pact at €119 billion a year for the EU and the €95 billion a year for the US once the agreement is fully implemented. As much as 80 percent of these gains, the study found, could come from the reduction of non-tariff barriers such as by harmonising regulations, as well as from liberalising services and public procurement.

ICTSD reporting; "EU parliament sees 'enormous opportunity in U.S. trade deal,'" REUTERS, 7 March 2013.



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## CLIMATE CHANGE

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# Obama to Face Climate Test in US-Canada Pipeline Decision

Debate over whether US President Barack Obama should approve a controversial oil-and-gas pipeline from Canada through the Gulf Coast has reached a fever pitch in Washington, following the highly-anticipated release of a draft assessment of the project's environmental impact. Observers and officials alike have said that the impending pipeline decision could indeed be one of the first tests of Obama's commitment to climate change issues, after the US President outlined an ambitious agenda in this area a month ago.

### Long-running controversy

Obama made headlines last year when he denied the original application of TransCanada for the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would have carried crude oil from Canada to the US state of Texas. (See Bridges Weekly, [18 January 2012](#)) At the time, the US President said that the Congress-set deadline for providing a decision on the project was "rushed and arbitrary," making it impossible to conduct a full assessment of the pipeline's environmental impact, as well as its effects on health and safety.

However, Obama left the possibility open for TransCanada to submit a revised application for review, which the company provided last spring. The new application modifies the route of the pipeline, avoiding the sensitive aquifers in the US state of Nebraska that many had feared would be at risk of catastrophic damage from an oil spill.

If the new version of the project is approved, it would transport up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude oil from Alberta, Canada, and the US state of Montana, through to the US state of Nebraska. There, it would connect to existing pipelines that would bring the oil through Oklahoma and onward to the Texas Gulf Coast region.

After reviewing the new application, the US State Department released this month a revised environmental impact statement for the Keystone pipeline that found the project's approval – or rejection – is "unlikely to have a substantial impact on the rate of development in the oil sands," and that the expected carbon emissions, while greater with tar sand oil than with conventional sources, would still be manageable.

Observers have noted that the draft report – which will now be subjected to a 45-day public comment period – could provide some political cover for Obama should he choose to sign off on the deal.

The project has been a lightning rod for controversy since the idea was first floated eight years ago. Environmental groups have long argued that the extraction and refining of Canadian sand oil produce substantial carbon emissions, and that the risk of a pipeline breach in environmentally sensitive areas could have devastating consequences.

### International community watching

The impending Keystone decision has drawn the attention of the international community and climate observers alike, who are waiting to see how Obama's State of the Union pledge to take a stronger approach on tackling climate change will translate into action. (See Bridges Weekly, [13 February 2013](#))

At the State of the Union, Obama insisted that his second term would focus heavily on combating climate change, and that if Congress did not act quickly enough in this area, he would take executive action himself.

"[A rejection of the Keystone pipeline] would be an extremely strong signal for the Obama administration," EU Commissioner for Climate Action Connie Hedegaard told reporters in Washington earlier this month, a sentiment that has been widely echoed by many in the climate community.

However, the approval – or rejection – of the project is also expected to have significant implications for the US' relationship with Canada, its largest trading partner in terms of goods.

Canadian Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver – a long-time proponent of the scheme – has said that he is "cautiously optimistic" that the approval will go through. He has also argued that the project is key both for achieving North American energy independence and in creating jobs in both countries.

"Canada is the largest supplier of oil to the United States," Oliver [said](#) last week. "Production of Canadian crude is supporting America's energy security and creating jobs on both sides of the border."

### **Lawmakers in Washington gear up for fight**

Since the release of the State Department draft assessment, action has geared up in Washington among lawmakers as they await the final decision from the White House. A subpanel of the House Foreign Affairs Committee is already slated to hold a [hearing](#) tomorrow on US energy security that will specifically address ties with Mexico and Canada, including the proposed pipeline.

Republicans have repeatedly called on the Obama Administration to avoid delaying the project, arguing that the environmental impact statement and the endorsement by Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman have removed any credible hurdles to launching construction.

"Further hesitation in approving Keystone XL would not only ensure higher economic costs, but enhance the fortunes of economic rivals, as Chinese state-owned oil companies and others race to secure permanent access to North American energy sources," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce [said](#) in a letter to Obama earlier this month, together with the other 24 Republican members of the panel.

Notably, Paul Ryan – a Republican who heads the House Budget Committee – released a budget plan on Tuesday that would require the federal approval of the Keystone pipeline, in what political observers are saying is a key sign of the project being a priority for his party.

However, some high-profile Democrats – including Henry Waxman, the ranking member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, who is also one of the backers of a new piece of carbon pricing legislation – have already slammed the State Department's environmental impact assessment.

"The draft impact statement appears to be seriously flawed," Waxman [said](#). "We don't need this dirty oil. To stop climate change and the destructive storms, droughts, floods, and wildfires that we are already experiencing, we should be investing in clean energy, not building a pipeline that will speed the exploitation of Canada's highly polluting tar sands."

The final decision for granting a Presidential Permit, however – a requirement for pipeline projects that cross borders – will ultimately be in the hands of the State Department and Obama. Newly-minted Secretary of State John Kerry has pledged that a decision will be coming in the near future, but has not provided specific details as to when that might be.

ICTSD reporting; “Hedegaard challenges US to get serious about climate change,” EURACTIV, 1 March 2013; “Ryan budget would approve Keystone pipeline, open more land for drilling,” THE HILL, 11 March 2013; “Obama Faces Risks in Pipeline Decision,” THE NEW YORK TIMES, 17 February 2013.

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## PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

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# EU, Thailand Trade Talks Kick Off

The EU and Thailand have launched negotiations for a bilateral trade deal, the two sides announced last week, following a meeting between European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The first formal round of negotiations is expected to take place by summer.

"I am deeply convinced that this FTA can bring substantial benefits to our already strong trade and investment relations," Barroso [said](#) in announcing the launch. The news follows the recent conclusion of a bilateral Partnership Cooperation Agreement – now awaiting approval by the EU member states – that covers issues such as nuclear proliferation, human rights, counterterrorism, and corruption. "We are entering a new era in our relations," he added.

Brussels and Bangkok hope to craft a trade deal that would cover issues such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, services, investment, procurement, regulations, competition, and sustainable development, according to the [European Commission](#). Thai officials have said that a deal could potentially be completed in less than two years.

The EU has been pushing for bilateral trade deals with all ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – which together constitute the EU's third largest trading partner after the US and China – since late 2009, most recently concluding negotiations with Singapore. (See Bridges Weekly, [19 December 2012](#))

The EU is currently in negotiations for individual deals with Malaysia and Vietnam, but agreements with those countries have not yet been reached.

Brussels has said it would eventually like to reach a region-to-region trade agreement with ASEAN, building off of this bilateral approach. While German Chancellor Angela Merkel has noted that such an agreement is unlikely to come to fruition anytime soon, she recently announced support for an individual agreement with Indonesia – another ASEAN member – describing it as a "subset" of an eventual regional pact with the ten country group.

Along with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, the other members of ASEAN are Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

Further regional economic integration within the Southeast Asian bloc is expected by the end of 2015 with the planned ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which seeks to establish a "single market and production base" among the 10 countries. "The EU wants Southeast Asia regional integration to succeed," Barroso said. "Open regionalism is a central pillar for reinforcing multilateralism at a global level."

Trade between the 27-nation bloc and Bangkok reached €32 billion in 2012. The EU is Thailand's third largest trading partner, while Thailand is the EU's third largest trading partner among the ASEAN members.

ICTSD reporting; "Thai-EU FTA deal within two years," THE NATION, 07 March 2013; "Thai PM puts free trade agreement on the table with EU," FINANCIAL TIMES, 07 March 2013.

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## EVENTS & RESOURCES

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# Events

### Coming soon

14 March, London, UK. NEW THINKING ON THE ROLE OF CENTRAL BANKS IN UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC TIMES. Chatham House, in conjunction with the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), will host this roundtable discussion on the role of central banks in maintaining financial stability and facilitating economic growth in 2013, particularly given the fragile and slow recovery of the global economy. This event is by invitation only, and will be held under the Chatham House Rule. To learn more, please visit the event [website](#).

18-19 March, San José, Costa Rica. LEADERSHIP MEETING ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. As part of the 11 Global Thematic Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, this high-level meeting will bring together NGOs, the sponsoring governments, and participants from the UN, among others, to discuss and define recommendations on environmental sustainability in a future framework. This consultation is being co-led by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), with support from the Governments of France and Costa Rica. More information is available at the event [website](#).

19 March, Geneva, Switzerland. DIALOGUE ON THE UPCOMING US FARM BILL: CHANGING PATTERNS OF SUPPORT AND TRADE. This event, hosted by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), will focus on current efforts in Washington to reform the structure of US agriculture support policies. The event will feature presentations from two experts in the field, who will describe how these potential changes could affect US trading partners. To learn more, please visit the event [website](#).

19 March, Geneva, Switzerland. DIALOGUE ON TRENDS IN GLOBAL BIOFUELS MARKETS: SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AND TRADE. This event, hosted by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) in partnership with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), will focus on the growth of global biofuel trade and the associated social, environmental, and economic outcomes, as well as the ongoing debates in various parts of the world regarding the reform of renewable fuels policies. Event organisers hope that the discussion can contribute to improving policy coherence in this field. To learn more, please visit the event [website](#).

19 March, Paris, France. RUSSIA BUSINESS SUMMIT. This event, organised by The Economist Events, will be held under the theme "Russia's Economic Future: Energy, Diversification, Innovation." At the event, senior executives and government officials will discuss Russia's latest stimulus programmes, investment climate, infrastructure projects, and development of innovation, particularly given Moscow's recent entry into the WTO and Vladimir Putin's return to the Russian presidency. More event details can be found [here](#).

22 March, London, UK. EUROPE AND JAPAN: A COMMON ECONOMIC AGENDA? Chatham House's International Economics department, together with the Japan Economic Foundation (JEF), will host their fourth symposium, bringing together senior policy

officials, academics, and private sector practitioners from Europe and Japan. Participants will discuss opportunities and challenges for economic integration between Asia and Europe, with a particular focus on the coordination of monetary policies within and between the two regions as well as the risks of rising public debt for developed economies. Attendance is by invitation only. More information is available at the event [website](#).

### WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted [here](#). Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of the different bodies. Unless otherwise indicated, all WTO meetings are held at the WTO, Centre William Rappard, rue de Lausanne 154, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland, and are open to WTO Members and accredited observers only.

14 March: WTO Introduction Day

20 March: Committee on Trade in Financial Services

20 + 22 March: Trade Policy Review Body – Argentina

### Other Upcoming Events

25-27 March, Bali, Indonesia. FOURTH MEETING OF HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. This fourth and final meeting of the UN High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be hosted by the government of Indonesia, and focus on the theme "Global Partnerships." The UN panel – which is chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and British Prime Minister David Cameron – has been tasked with defining a new global development framework beyond 2015, the completion date for the Millennium Development Goals. This meeting will feed into the panel's preparation of a final report on the subject, which will be submitted to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon by the end of May. More information is available at the event [website](#).

17-19 April, Geneva, Switzerland. SEVENTH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND TOWNS. This event will explore how governments can take advantage of a green and socially responsible economy when trying to address local economic, social, and environmental challenges. Experts in the field of sustainability will attend the conference and will outline their experiences in finding sustainable solutions, along with making recommendations for policies that can be implemented by governments to achieve a sustainable economy. More information is available [here](#).

6-8 November, Karlsruhe, Germany. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY: INTERNATIONAL GREENING EDUCATION EVENT 2013. This year's International Greening Education Event aims to provide a forum for examining how global issues such as climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and other challenges are affecting the education sector; how to embed sustainability in curricula, courses, and teaching material; and other topics related to education and the environment. Attendees will include academia, policy makers, representatives of international development agencies, senior members of academic institutions, administrators and teachers, sustainable development practitioners, environmental management professionals and other stakeholders from around the world. To learn more about the event, please visit the following [website](#).

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## Resources

LETTING THE SUN SHINE IN AT THE WTO: HOW TRANSPARENCY BRINGS THE TRADING SYSTEM TO LIFE. By Robert Wolfe of the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University. Published by the World Trade Organization. (March 2013) This working paper addresses the logic of transparency in general, and the motivation for its use in the multilateral trading system. The author also analyses information on the existing transparency mechanisms within the WTO, and provides suggestions for improving transparency within the Geneva-based trade body. The working paper is available [here](#).

SERVICES TRADE LIBERALIZATION AND FOOD SECURITY IN ASEAN. By Alexander Chandra and Herjuno Kinasih for the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Trade Knowledge Network. (March 2013) This paper addresses the potential role that services trade liberalisation could play in promoting food security. Focusing on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the authors argue that food security could serve as an important rationale for the Association to deepen services sector reform. The full publication is available [here](#).

OECD ECONOMIC SURVEYS: SOUTH AFRICA 2013. Published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (March 2013). This report provides an economic survey of South Africa, finding that – while the country is advancing – there is still room for it to achieve its full growth potential. Specifically, the authors note that a high proportion of the South African population remains unemployed, income inequality continues to be high, and educational outcomes are both poor on average and uneven. Given these results, the OECD report outlines a series of recommendations to address these challenges, with a specific focus on macroeconomic policy, labour and product markets, education, and green growth-oriented policies. The report is available [here](#).

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK 2013, WITH PERSPECTIVES ON CHINA AND INDIA. Published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (March 2013). This edition of the OECD's Southeast Asian Economic Outlook examines medium-term growth prospects, recent macroeconomic policy challenges, and structural challenges including human capital, infrastructure, and small-and-medium sized enterprise (SME) development. To learn more, or to read the publication, please click [here](#).

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