

BRIDGES WEEKLY

Global trade news from a sustainable development perspective

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 16, 8 MAY 2014

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JAPAN

Japan's Abe Makes Push for EU, Pacific Trade Pacts in Europe Visit

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe issued a strong defence of his economic strategy this week – including a call for advancing trade pacts with the EU, US, and other partners – during his high-profile tour of Europe, pledging to not be afraid of domestic reforms as he continues his efforts to jumpstart the world's fourth-largest economy.

"The Japanese economy is back," Abe [said](#) in Paris on Tuesday at a ministerial-level meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which his government was chairing. "The vigorous economy that was once brimming with vitality as the 'engine of world growth' has returned once again."

"The Japanese people are reaping the benefits of economic revival. The conditions are all set. Now, it's time for bold reforms," he pledged.

Abe became Japan's Prime Minister in late 2012, having served a previous term in the role in 2006-2007. Upon his return to office, he pledged to institute a three-pronged plan known as "Abenomics" aimed at revamping the Asian island country's economy, focusing on monetary stimulus, fiscal spending, and structural reforms.

Much of the Abenomics focus so far has been on the Japanese Central Bank's efforts at bringing the country's economy out of a long stretch of deflation, implementing an aggressive quantitative easing programme with the goal of hitting a two percent inflation rate within two years.

These efforts have yielded dividends, the Prime Minister insisted on Tuesday, noting that his country is "now truly on the verge of pulling out of deflation."

He also highlighted the recent decision to increase the consumption tax rate – the first time this has happened in 17 years – as another example where he is taking "bold reforms," along with a series of others.

Recent reports, such as one issued by the International Monetary Fund, have highlighted Japan's economic growth since the launch of Abe's strategy. However, the international finance institution warned, further clarity and implementation of structural reforms will be key in order to avoid seeing this progress wane. (See Bridges Weekly, [1 May 2014](#))

The OECD, in its own [report](#) on Tuesday, has similarly cautioned that the hoped-for inflation in Japan may not be matched with wage growth, which could in turn lead to decreased consumer spending and investment, and a resulting economic slowdown. The rich-country club also lowered its growth forecast for Japan this year to 1.2 percent, from the previous estimate of 1.5 percent.

Trade topping reform agenda

Top on his list of reforms, Abe told his Paris audience on Tuesday, would be to ramp up negotiations on a series of Economic Partnership Agreements, or EPAs, that Japan is in the process of conducting with various trading partners. These include the EU, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the eleven other members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

"Regional trade liberalisation results in less economic welfare than global trade liberalisation," Abe continued in his address at the OECD meeting. "However, Japan promotes multilateral EPA negotiations, such as those underway with the EU, not simply in pursuit of abolishing tariffs. Instead, it also stems from our wish to build a new economic order."

A day later in Brussels, Abe met with EU leaders to discuss a series of bilateral issues, including the planned trade pact between the two sides. Following the Wednesday meeting, officials [confirmed](#) that they hope to wrap up the trade negotiations quickly, with Abe suggesting in subsequent comments to reporters that the deal could be completed next year.

"We reaffirm the importance of strengthening the trade and economic relationship between the EU and Japan, and of the early conclusion of a highly comprehensive and ambitious Free Trade Agreement (FTA)/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) which would play a vital role in this regard," the leaders said in a joint statement following the Brussels summit.

The EU-Japan trade talks kicked off in April of last year, in what was welcomed as an "historic event" by officials at the time, given that the two sides together make up approximately one-third of the world's economic output. However, the negotiations were launched with the caveat that any reductions in tariffs on the EU side must be matched by eliminations of non-tariff barriers by Japan. (See Bridges Weekly, [27 March 2013](#))

If sufficient progress is not seen in the areas of non-tariff barriers, railways, and urban roadmaps within one-year of the negotiation's launch, the European Commission will be required to suspend the talks.

After five rounds of bilateral negotiations, the Commission's progress review is currently underway, and will soon be submitted to the European Council. Media reports have indicated that Brussels is satisfied so far with most of Tokyo's commitments in this area, suggesting that the talks will likely be allowed to continue.

"Negotiations have now reached a critical phase," European Council President Herman Van Rompuy told [reporters](#) on Wednesday. "If the one-year review of the Free Trade Agreement so allows, we must raise the level of ambition and bring these negotiations to a speedy and successful conclusion."

"We want these negotiations to succeed," European Commission President José Manuel Barroso added. "But for this agreement to be truly transformational, we need to inject a high level of ambition across the board, especially in the areas such as market access for goods, including agriculture, non-tariff barriers, public procurement, and geographical indications."

Abe: US, Japan to "accelerate" TPP talks

Japan's participation in another major trade initiative – the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership talks – has also been subject to close scrutiny by trade observers since the Asian economy joined nearly a year ago.

The main focus has been on whether Japan will be able to make sufficient concessions in agriculture and automobiles – both sensitive areas for the country – in order to satisfy its trading partners, particularly the US.

In recent months, the two sides have been holding a series of bilateral meetings in an effort to resolve their differences, particularly regarding Japan's highly-protected agricultural sector. However, while a "path forward" was announced when US President Barack Obama visited Abe in Tokyo last month, it has not been made clear how far apart the two sides still are. (See Bridges Weekly, [1 May 2014](#))

"Negotiations are... in their final phase on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement," Abe said in Paris. "Japan and the United States will act in cooperation to accelerate negotiations further towards the early conclusion of negotiations by the 12 participating countries as a whole."

Japan recently completed negotiations for a bilateral trade pact with Australia, in what many noted was the first deal that the Asian economy had made with a major agricultural exporter, and included some unprecedented concessions by Tokyo in the areas of beef and dairy. (See Bridges Weekly, [10 April 2014](#))

However, the US has said it is seeking even more ambitious results on agriculture tariffs in the TPP than what was agreed in the Australia pact, while Japan has urged Washington to show more flexibility, given that farm policy is a very sensitive topic domestically.

The resolution of the US-Japan divide is said to be key in advancing the TPP talks. Yet even if this path forward does lead to an outcome, various other issues still remain outstanding across the different negotiating chapters of the deal, and whether it can be completed by end-2014 – as Washington has said it wants – or could drag into 2015 remains highly uncertain.

In this context, chief negotiators for the 12-country talks are set to meet in Vietnam later this month, with a TPP ministerial expected shortly thereafter.

ICTSD reporting; "UPDATE 1-Japan meets most conditions for 'vital' EU trade talks – documents," REUTERS, 5 May 2014; "OECD warns Japan's economy may suffer inflation without wage growth," THE JAPAN TIMES, 6 May 2014.

PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

EU, US Officials Renew T-TIP Push Ahead of Fifth Negotiating Round

Top officials from the US and EU have continued to make a strong public push in favour of their planned bilateral trade pact, highlighting the critical nature of such a deal for advancing global trade rule-making and for lowering the EU's dependence on Russian energy. The political support comes ahead of the fifth round of formal trade negotiations, which is scheduled to take place in the US city of Arlington, Virginia from 19-23 May.

Earlier this week, US Trade Representative Michael Froman and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht held a series of meetings in Berlin on the proposed agreement – known formally as the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T-TIP – which included participation in a [public forum](#) hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

The two officials sought to assuage concerns from the public that the deal could lead to the watering down of regulatory norms, given the negotiation's focus on harmonising regulations and standards where possible. They also highlighted its potential gains for both sides and the world economy as a whole.

Their meeting came just days after German Chancellor Angela Merkel met with her American counterpart, US President Barack Obama, in Washington, where the two leaders publicly reaffirmed their commitment to the "mega-regional" pact.

Market access

The two sides already exchanged their initial tariff offers earlier this year, with revised ones expected shortly. While tariffs on both sides are already low – at approximately 5.2 percent on the EU's part and 3.5 percent for the US – the high volume of goods traded between them means that any tariff reductions are expected to generate significant gains. (See Bridges Weekly, [20 March 2014](#))

At the time of the previous offer submission, the EU criticised the US offer as not being sufficiently ambitious, urging Washington to go further in its next version. The US, meanwhile, has said that it does indeed intend to pursue full tariff elimination in the deal.

"When we launched these negotiations, we agreed that the goal was the full elimination of tariffs – on industrial products and on agricultural products," Froman [said](#) in Berlin on Monday. "We remain committed to that goal today."

For the EU's part, De Gucht [stressed](#) that the 28-nation bloc wishes "to eliminate as many tariffs as possible," while also highlighting the importance of improved market access in services and public procurement in order to boost growth and jobs.

The US is currently in the process of preparing its services offer, which Froman confirmed would be based on a negative list approach; in other words, all services sectors except those explicitly excluded will be covered in Washington's offer.

The US trade official said that he hopes the EU to demonstrate "the same level of ambition" in this area.

Investor-state dispute settlement

Another thorny topic in the trade talks remains the subject of investor protections, including investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), which essentially allows foreign companies to bring claims against a host company in front of an international tribunal, if it finds that one of its key protections has been violated.

Detractors have warned against including ISDS provisions in the pact, fearing that doing so could allow foreign companies to challenge hard-won public policies, such as those involving public health and the environment. Proponents, however, note that these protections can also ensure that a company's investments are safe abroad – thus increasing investor confidence in the business climate – while preventing companies from exploiting loopholes in domestic laws.

In light of the controversy on the subject, the EU launched a public consultation in March on the investment part of the talks, which is currently ongoing. Meanwhile, the EU has continued to highlight the importance of including ISDS in the pact – despite reports that some member states, such as Germany, may be less certain. The US, for its part, has made clear that this provision is essential. (See Bridges Weekly, [3 April 2014](#))

"We both have strong rule of law. We have strong legal traditions against discrimination against foreign investors," Froman acknowledged on Monday, noting that the ISDS concept was actually invented in Europe and is used there more than anywhere else.

"But many of the other countries don't," he continued, noting that the US hopes that "investment protection will be one of several areas in which T-TIP is able to set a new global standard."

However, Sigmar Gabriel, who hosted Monday's event and is Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, took a different tone on the ISDS subject.

"I believe our [legal] systems offer enough protection," he said. "I don't believe we need a special investment tribunal for this and the experience... is very double-edged. I think there's rightly a lot of reservations," he added, while welcoming the EU public consultations on ISDS.

Changing global landscape

The US Trade Representative was in Berlin on Monday for a series of meetings with high-level officials on the trans-Atlantic pact, before heading to Paris for the Ministerial Council meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and a WTO "mini-ministerial" being hosted by Australia.

The WTO mini-ministerial focused primarily on the Doha Round of trade talks, given that the global trade body's members are in the process of preparing a work programme aimed at resolving the stalled negotiations. Last year's WTO agreement in Bali on trade facilitation and a few other elements was the first concrete deliverable from the multilateral talks since they were launched in 2001.

While trade officials have continued to reiterate the value of finalising the WTO negotiations, many countries have in recent years been pursuing their own regional and bilateral initiatives in parallel, such as T-TIP, in the hopes of making advances in areas where the global trade talks have not.

Furthermore, proponents of these initiatives say, advances in these areas could help spur rule-making at the global level.

"The World Trade Organization already provides many of the rules we need. But there are gaps," De Gucht said on Monday, citing the treatment of state-owned enterprises, energy, and raw materials exports as just a few examples.

"Good multilateral rules on these kind of issues take a lot of time to achieve, if at all, because they are complicated," he noted. "Working bilaterally within the T-TIP to begin with is therefore much easier than working with the 159 members of the WTO. And if the agreement covers 40 percent of the world economy, [then] that will be a basis for future work with more partners."

The rise of new powers around the world – and the resulting change in balance of the global economy – is yet another reason for the two partners to consolidate their relationship, the EU trade chief said.

"Both the EU and the US will have less weight in the future than we do today," De Gucht warned. "So if we still want to champion the values that we share – an open rules-based trading system or global rules based on high standards of health, the environment, labour, and consumer protection – then we better work together."

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine – and the resulting fall-out that the EU, US, and various other Western powers have experienced with Russia – is yet one more reason for strengthening the EU-US relationship, officials have stressed in recent weeks.

"[T-TIP is] about establishing an economic relationship commensurate with the strongest alliance on earth," Froman said on Monday. "As I'm sure I don't have to remind people in light of recent events, the economic and strategic imperative of T-TIP has never been stronger."

US President Barack Obama has publicly said that the deal could help reduce the dependence that some EU member states have on Russian energy products, such as by making it easier for the US to approve licenses to export gas to Europe.

Currently, six of the EU's members rely entirely on Russia for gas supplies, making it difficult for the bloc to pursue hard-hitting sanctions on Moscow for fear of retaliation.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told [reporters](#) in Washington last Friday that the EU is discussing a series of short- and long-term measures to improve reverse flow and the grade of its pipelines, and thus limit the bloc's reliance on Russian energy. "The free trade agreement, T-TIP, is also gaining more prominence in this respect," she said.

ICTSD reporting.

AFRICA

African Trade Ministers Split on EPA Path Forward as Deadline Looms

The October deadline for African countries to conclude their Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU took centre stage at a meeting of African Union (AU) trade ministers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with countries remaining divided over the path forward. During last week's meeting, officials also discussed the continent's role in the WTO's post-Bali process, while reviewing other bilateral and regional trade initiatives, including the hoped-for renewal of the US' African Growth and Opportunity Act and the preparations for a future Continental Free Trade Area.

EPAs fuel scepticism

At last week's meeting, several African trade ministers openly sided with Nigeria against the planned EU EPAs, despite recent progress made by some regional blocs towards finalising these trade pacts.

"We must not sign an agreement without first of all carrying out a robust economic analysis of the overall impact the agreement will have on the region, our children and future generations," reiterated Nigerian trade minister Olesugun Aganga. (See Bridges Africa, [15 April 2014](#))

One trade expert who has been following the negotiations closely indicated that such a strong declaration could negatively influence those countries involved in the process that still remain indecisive.

Zambian commerce minister Robert Sichinga agreed with Nigeria, encouraging African countries to further deepen their intra-regional trade through value addition of their raw materials. Similar sentiments were also expressed by Niger trade minister Alma Oumarou, who urged fellow African countries to evaluate the EPAs' impacts realistically before signing.

AU Trade Commissioner Fatima Haram Acyl agreed with the ministers, [explaining](#) that there remains little clarity on the way forward regarding the EPAs, while noting the potential challenges that these could pose for the continent's structural transformation.

"As far as Europe continues to insist on the present model of EPA... Africa should not agree to the EPAs," she declared. Should the negotiations continue along the same vein, she added, Africa should consider EPA alternatives – such as deepening intra-African trade ties and pushing for alternative arrangements with Brussels, such as the EU Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).

Some experts say, however, that the EU GSP is not a genuine alternative to EPAs, given that the former is a unilateral scheme – thus having limited predictability. The GSP, they note, addresses only market access issues, without other development components. The reciprocity required under EPAs, meanwhile, is likely to pose challenges for African countries.

According to the draft report of the conference, a copy of which has been seen by Bridges, the AU Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) were both mandated to analyse the impact that the 1 October withdrawal of the EU Market Access

Regulation – which provides these countries with preferential access to the European market – would have on Africa.

They have been also been asked to consider alternative solutions in order to avoid trade disruptions, should that October deadline not be extended.

“Even if we were to say, ‘Oh no, what a bad idea, let’s do something,’ it would take us two years,” one EU official told the Financial Times, suggesting that the deadline might not be pushed back.

Despite these concerns, efforts are still underway to conclude regional EPAs in Africa before the deadline. West African leaders reached a compromise earlier this year on their pact with Brussels – despite reservations by some African countries, most vocally Nigeria, over the deal’s potential impact on their industrial development. (See Bridges Africa, [31 March 2014](#))

Some experts warn that the EPA negotiations now appear to be taking a different path, and still have no clear end in sight. The situation seems to be particularly challenging for countries such as Kenya, Ivory Coast, and Ghana which are struggling to balance the need to preserve their EU market access with the position of their respective regional blocs.

ECOWAS committee review

Last March, ECOWAS heads of state and government established an ad hoc committee – consisting of Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal – to continue work on the EU-West Africa EPA, including the analysis of the remaining technical concerns raised by Nigeria on the current compromise. The committee was asked to respond within two months.

Sources confirm that Nigeria reaffirmed its EPA objections during a separate meeting held in Accra, Ghana last week. Nigeria argues that the current market access structure – market opening of 75 percent over the next 20 years, with 90 percent of products to be liberalised during the first 15 years – would significantly hamper its economy.

It has instead requested a reclassification of 181 tariff lines in other categories of the offer, which some warn could dismantle the current compromise. The results of the Accra meeting should be submitted to the trade ministers of these four countries when they meet on 10 May.

Post-Bali

In Addis, trade ministers also discussed the implications of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, which was concluded at the global trade body’s Ninth Ministerial Conference in Bali, Indonesia in December 2013.

The draft conference report says that the trade facilitation pact – which was the pinnacle of the “Bali package” – should be implemented on a provisional basis, in line with paragraph 47 of the Doha Declaration. The pact, they urge, should later be reviewed for balance with the rest of the Doha Round areas once these are resolved, in line with the WTO principle of the “single undertaking.”

The comments come as the WTO Preparatory Committee on Trade Facilitation prepares to enter the second phase of its work toward implementing the pact, having finished a legal scrubbing of the English version of the text last week. The committee will now begin drafting a Protocol of Amendment in order to formally insert the trade facilitation deal into the overall WTO Agreement.

Once that process is complete, the deal will then be open for ratification by the global trade body’s members from 31 July 2014 to the same date next year. Approval from two-

thirds of the membership will be required in order for the pact to enter into force. (For more on trade facilitation, see related story, this issue)

Negotiators for the African Group in Geneva have therefore been instructed by the AU trade commissioner to formally submit language on the Protocol of Amendment to the Preparatory Committee as it begins this next stage. Furthermore, ministers have mandated the AU Commission to send a new request to WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo to help mobilise financial resources for implementing the pact's new requirements, once these enter into force.

A representative from Lesotho, which is the current African Group coordinator, also reportedly urged African trade ministers in Addis to provide guidance on what the group's position should be in the post-Bali process, especially ahead of next year's ministerial conference.

WTO members are in the process of developing a work programme aimed at resolving the remaining issues of the organisation's Doha Round of trade talks, which have been at an impasse for years. They have been given until the end of 2014 to establish such a plan.

The AU meeting report draws lessons for the African Group on the way forward, such as the need for the continent to speak with one voice in the multilateral negotiations. To this end, the group has held quarterly retreats with the goal of harmonising its position on the post-Bali negotiations.

AGOA extension

African trade ministers also discussed the need for extending the US' African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for the next 15 years, while continuing to consolidate regional integration in parallel. The US legislation is set to expire in September 2015, and currently provides about 6500 African products with preferential quota and duty-free access to its markets.

The conference draft report highlights better market access, flexible rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and capacity building as priority areas that should be put forward for the US' consideration.

The Obama Administration has already committed to pursuing a "seamless" AGOA renewal, while stressing that it wants to review and update the scheme in order to maintain the US' competitive edge in Africa. As part of the review, Washington has indicated that it will drill down into the thousands of duty-free tariff lines under AGOA to determine if some sectors or countries should gradually be eased out of the programme as they become more competitive. (See Bridges Africa, [14 August 2013](#))

In response to an impact assessment requested by the US last year, the UN Economic Commission for Africa undertook a similar assessment of the scheme with a view to enhancing its effectiveness, and presented the results during last week's conference.

Continental Free Trade Area

Trade ministers also highlighted the importance of improving regional integration in order to ensure the continent's structural transformation and development. According to the report, negotiations for a planned Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) could cover trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights, and other "new" issues, provided such talks are sequenced.

Chad trade minister Aziz Mahamat Saleh noted that efforts towards establishing such a pact by 2017 have already shown some progress, in line with the [road map](#) adopted by the AU Summit of Heads of States and Government in January 2012. (See Bridges Africa, [31](#)

[March 2014](#)). The proposed CFTA is a key component of the AU's strategy to boost trade within the region by at least 25-30 percent in the next decade.

In this context, ministers reviewed various documents last week, including [the draft objectives and guiding principles for negotiating the CFTA](#), with a view toward outlining negotiating objectives and suitable institutional arrangements.

Intra-African trade currently represents 12 percent of Africa's trade with the rest of the world, compared to 60 percent for Europe, 40 percent for North America, and 30 percent for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), according to WTO data.

Some African countries have cited the uncertainties involved in the current multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations as an additional incentive to maintain the momentum towards establishing a CFTA. For example, the end of the EU's quotas on African sugar exports in 2017 and falling world prices will likely force African producers to focus on maximising regional trade, a point highlighted by the Swaziland Sugar Association at a separate event last month.

Furthermore, observers note that the draft report implicitly refers to other free trade agreements currently under negotiation – such as the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) or the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) – as further reason for Africa to step up its own integration efforts.

ICTSD reporting; "African leaders join Nigeria to reject European economic agreement," THIS DAY LIVE, 30 April 2014; "African Sugar Farmers Eye Continental Trade as EU Quota End Near," BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK, 30 April 2014; "Nigeria's domestic concerns override enthusiasm for Europe deal," FINANCIAL TIMES, 4 May 2014.

FOOD SECURITY

FAO, OECD: Food Security Key to G-20 Growth Goals

A joint agency report is set to urge G-20 members to tackle food security if they are to succeed in boosting growth and creating jobs, according to a draft version seen by Bridges.

The paper was prepared by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and is set to be discussed at the G-20's Development Working Group meeting today and tomorrow in Hobart, Australia.

The paper argues that improved food security is critical to the G-20's growth agenda under the Australian presidency in 2014, which seeks to consolidate economic recovery in the wake of the 2008 global slowdown. (See Bridges Weekly, [17 April 2014](#))

However, policies on economic growth must also be inclusive if they are to tackle hunger and malnutrition effectively, the draft says. "It is through those growth linkages that the G-20 can deliver on food security," one source familiar with the paper told Bridges.

Poverty and inequality

The G-20 needs to take "concrete actions that address the underlying cause of food insecurity – poverty," the draft says.

Strong growth in many developing countries has not always translated into reductions in poverty and improved food security, the agencies note.

In particular, unequal distribution of assets – such as land, water, capital, education, and health – have often prevented the poor from benefiting from economic growth, and have slowed progress in tackling malnutrition.

"About half of the world's undernourished are in G-20 countries," explained one source familiar with the draft. More inclusive growth could therefore be a significant step towards improving global food security.

Rural investment needed

The authors cite evidence suggesting that improving agricultural growth in low income countries is three times as effective in reducing extreme poverty – where people live on less than one dollar a day – than growth increases in other sectors.

The paper also presents research by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which looked at options for all countries and regions to achieve, by 2020, the G-20 target of two percent additional GDP growth. G-20 leaders are set to release in November their national plans for achieving this goal for their own members within five years. (See Bridges Weekly, [27 February 2014](#))

IFPRI found that investments in rural infrastructure would have the biggest impact on rural value added and rural wages, especially in Africa, the paper says.

However, some fear that G-20 discussions on investment and infrastructure have so far largely disregarded food security considerations – and might therefore not fully capitalise on growth potential in the countryside.

“They don’t consider rural areas,” one source noted. “Food security has been left off.”

Tackling inequality must complement trade opening

“The adoption of more coherent agricultural, trade, and development policies could deliver important gains for the world’s poor and vulnerable,” the agencies are expected to argue.

But while more open food and agricultural trade policies can reinforce growth, employment, and food security, they also need to be matched by complementary measures, the draft says.

Countries need to invest in the supply of food and farm goods, the agencies argue, such as by raising productivity levels. However, they also need to set in place “social safety nets” to help producers who cannot respond effectively to new market opportunities.

In Africa, transport costs account for 50 to 60 percent of total marketing costs, the report notes. “Export bans, unnecessary permits and licences, costly document requirements, and conflicting standards can all raise transaction costs,” the agencies will say.

Concrete initiatives

G-20 members need to concentrate on concrete initiatives that deliver results, the agencies will urge.

The draft paper points to progress in improving market transparency as an example of what the G-20 can achieve. The Agricultural Market Information System, or AMIS, is singled out for particular praise.

In 2012, when global maize prices reacted to a severe drought in the US, AMIS helped prevent policies from being introduced “that would add to the nervousness of the market,” the agencies will recall. (See Bridges Weekly, [24 October 2012](#))

The draft paper also commends a G-20 deal three years ago to exempt humanitarian food aid purchases from farm export restrictions, when food price spikes threatened the ability of UN agencies to respond to emergencies. (See Bridges Weekly, [9 November 2011](#))

“G-20 countries could play a leadership role” on this issue, a source familiar with the draft told Bridges.

Undermining credibility

However, the agencies will warn that failure to follow through in relevant forums on G-20 decisions “undermines the G-20’s credibility in the longer term.”

The draft notes that the G-20 deal on exempting humanitarian food aid from export restrictions was not ultimately adopted at the WTO, despite a push to do so ahead of the global trade body’s 2011 ministerial conference.

At the time, some developing countries such as India expressed reservations about adopting the G-20 commitment in the WTO.

The draft suggests that “concerted political efforts” to support initiatives such as the food aid agreement are likely to be more effective than “blanket expressions of support” for the WTO’s Doha Round.

Doha: "laudable aim"

However, another source familiar with the draft told Bridges that concluding the Doha Round negotiations could still play an important role in improving food security. WTO members are currently in the process of elaborating a "work programme" for resolving the multilateral trade talks, now in their thirteenth year.

"Just because something's difficult, that doesn't mean it shouldn't be done," the source observed.

The agencies' draft acknowledges that concluding Doha is a "laudable aim," but urges G-20 members to focus their efforts on measures where the group can "add value according to its comparative advantage."

It cautioned against duplicating work in areas covered by other organisations – including the WTO.

The Asian Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), IFPRI, and the WTO are listed as having provided inputs on the paper. In 2011, as many as ten international agencies collaborated on a similar report. (See Bridges Weekly, [11 May 2011](#))

The road from Hobart

The draft is now likely to be revised further following discussion among government officials in the Development Working Group in Hobart.

Sources familiar with the process told Bridges that much depends on the extent to which the G-20 decides to address food security in an integrated manner in the group's wider agenda, or whether it will leave the issue to be discussed in the Development Working Group.

"The most important thing would be to mainstream food security across the pillars," one source familiar with the process told Bridges.

The report is due to be finalised at a subsequent meeting in July. Sherpas will then consider the report's recommendations in the run-up to the G-20 leaders' meeting, scheduled for 15-16 November in Brisbane.

A separate meeting of G-20 trade ministers is also planned for 19 July in Sydney.

ICTSD reporting.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Trade Ministers in Paris Urge Quick Implementation of Bali Deal

WTO members should continue their efforts to quickly implement the trade facilitation agreement inked in Bali, Indonesia last December, trade ministers meeting in Paris on Wednesday said at an informal mini-ministerial hosted by Australia.

The annual trade ministers gathering on the sidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) annual meetings is one of several key events on the international trade calendar, with the discussions often expected to give political guidance for next steps in the Doha Round process.

"Our first and highest priority must be to implement the Bali package," US Trade Representative Michael Froman [said](#) at the event, according to a copy of his remarks provided by his office.

"Frankly, it's inconceivable that there could be further progress on other WTO priorities if the Trade Facilitation Agreement isn't fully implemented," he added, while noting that so far most members appear to be "taking their obligations seriously."

"There really should be no back-sliding," he added.

Back in Geneva, the process to implement the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement is now entering its second stage, sources say, after members completed their legal review of the document last Friday.

The Preparatory Committee on Trade Facilitation, which was established in the wake of the Bali ministerial conference, has been going through the text agreed in December to correct any inconsistencies in the document. The changes were of a "purely formal manner," sources confirmed, and did not change the deal's substance.

The next step will be for the translations of the updated text to be sent to the capitals of Spanish- and French-speaking WTO member countries for an assessment, after which Esteban Conejos – the Philippines' Ambassador to the global trade body, who serves as the preparatory committee's chair – will hold a special meeting to adopt the revised text.

The committee will next draw up a protocol of amendment in order to incorporate the pact into the WTO Agreement, with that process set to begin on 26 May.

Ministers agreed last December that the preparatory committee should end its work by 31 July. WTO members will then have until that same date next year to ratify the pact, with two-thirds approval required in order for the deal to enter into force.

Doha Round re-start

Another key topic on the Paris ministerial meeting agenda was the next steps for the WTO's Doha Round, in light of an end-2014 deadline for members to develop a work programme to resolve the long-running talks.

"Beyond implementation, it's important for us today to begin a real conversation about where the WTO, including the Doha Round, is going post-Bali," Froman said.

"Whatever programme we establish, it's got to be do-able and provide clear solutions," Australian trade minister Andrew Robb, who hosted the meeting, said, in comments reported by social media site Twitter.

To date, consultations among the WTO membership on the work programme have generally centred on the need to address the three toughest issues of the Round – agriculture, non-agricultural market access, and services – in any final work programme, with many members saying that the level of ambition in agriculture will likely set that of the rest of the negotiations.

The chairs of negotiating groups are now in the second stage of consultations among the membership about the way forward, and a meeting of the WTO's General Council – the organisation's highest decision-making body outside the ministerial conference – is set for 12 May.

ICTSD reporting.

SERVICES

TISA Negotiators Report Progress on New, Enhanced Disciplines Talks

The latest round of negotiations on the proposed Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) came to a close on Friday, with officials reporting good progress in the talks. The week-long meetings, hosted by the Australian mission in Geneva, focused primarily on the part of the text dealing with new and enhanced disciplines, sources say.

"I am pleased with the constant progress of the TISA negotiations," said EU Ambassador Angelos Pangratis, in a post on social media site Twitter. "We are clearly heading towards a comprehensive and ambitious agreement."

The 23-member group, which covers 50 countries – the 28-nation EU being counted as one participant – is negotiating a standalone pact that would liberalise services trade, with the goal of eventually multilateralising the deal in order to extend the benefits to the whole WTO membership, once they reach a critical mass of participants.

A week ago, officials from Australia, Colombia, the EU, Turkey, and the US participated in a public information session on the TISA negotiations, midway through last week's negotiations. The officials – which included ambassadors and chief negotiators from those countries – reaffirmed that the services liberalisation initiative is continuing to advance smoothly, just a year after the talks were formally launched in Geneva. (See Bridges Weekly, [1 May 2014](#))

The next round is set to be held in late June, and will be hosted by the US. While officials remain optimistic about the pace of the talks, given the "constructive spirit" seen among the membership, a deadline has not been set for concluding the TISA negotiations, with multiple sources noting that the substance will effectively determine the timetable.

New, enhanced disciplines

Four of the five days last week were devoted to discussions of new and enhanced disciplines that would potentially be covered by TISA.

The bulk of those discussions, sources familiar with the talks confirmed, focused on texts regarding financial services; telecommunications; e-commerce; domestic regulation and transparency; and air, maritime, and road transport. Initial discussions were also held on competitive delivery services and energy services.

Proposals on these areas have been submitted by various participants, with the submitted texts becoming the basis for discussions, with brackets denoting the areas that remain to be negotiated and agreed. The next round of talks is also expected to focus on developing the regulatory part of the TISA text further, sources say.

Market access offers

One of the days was focused on continuing the discussions on market access offers. TISA participants had held their first formal review of those offers last February, less than a year after the negotiations were formally launched, with 21 of the 23 participants submitting offers for review. (See Bridges Weekly, [27 February 2014](#))

Since then, the US has submitted a revised offer that includes financial services. The two participants that have not yet tabled an offer – Pakistan and Paraguay – did not do so in time for this round.

At this stage, sources say, much of the discussion on market access offers is continuing at the bilateral level between meetings, on a request-offer basis. Participants are hoping to establish horizontal benchmarks or objectives in order to reduce asymmetries across the different offers, in order to ensure that everyone has offers of similar levels.

China, Uruguay bids

Whether and when to admit China and Uruguay into the talks has not yet been confirmed, sources say. While the two bids have received the public backing of the EU, and are supported by various TISA members, the US is still reportedly seeking assurances from both countries that they share the group's goals and will be able to contribute constructively to the talks.

While no other countries have formally declared their interest in joining TISA since China and Uruguay submitted their bids, sources note that the proposed agreement is generating substantial interest from others.

"The EU is particularly encouraged by the high degree of interest that TISA is drawing among other WTO members," said Pangratis, reiterating the EU's support for both the Chinese and Uruguayan bids.

ICTSD reporting.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

China Moves Forward with Duties on EU Polysilicon

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) at the end of April [confirmed](#) final anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on imports of solar-grade polysilicon from the EU, a raw material used in the manufacturing of solar panels.

Following an investigation launched in November 2012, the ministry said that a causal relationship had been found between the alleged EU dumping and subsidies, and the material injury suffered by China's domestic producers. The EU's exports of polysilicon to China were valued at €700 million in 2011, according to the European Commission.

MOFCOM's statement indicated that one German company, Wacker Chemie AG, will be exempt from the measures due to its previous "price commitment." The world's second largest polysilicon maker reached a price undertaking [deal](#) with Beijing in March, pledging to not sell the solar material on the Chinese market below a set minimum price.

At that time, the Commission indicated that Wacker Chemie AG accounts for a significant part of EU polysilicon exports to China.

According to Reuters, however, the measures will affect other German, Italian, and Spanish companies such as Schmid Group, Joint Solar Silicon, MEMC Electronic Materials SpA, and Siliken Spain. Anti-dumping duties are set at a whopping 42 percent, and were imposed on 1 May for a period of two years. Anti-subsidy duties are set at 1.2 percent.

Renewables horse trade

The move joins a list of separate solar spats between Brussels and Beijing, as well as other capitals. After a sour stand-off, the EU and China struck a deal last year effectively exempting Chinese solar panel manufacturers from heavy anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties, specifically by having them agree to a price undertaking arrangement. (See Bridges Weekly, [5 September 2013](#)).

In April, the EU's 28 member states also reportedly backed the imposition of definitive anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on Chinese imports of solar glass, also used in the manufacturing of solar panels, a year after the Commission launched two separate investigations into the allegedly unfair trade practices. (See Bridges Weekly, [17 April 2014](#))

For its part, in January, China imposed final anti-dumping duties on South Korean and US polysilicon, also inflicting anti-subsidy duties on the latter. These have both been provisionally in place since last year. Washington has its own complaints about Chinese support for its solar industry, as well as other green energy sources such as wind-power.

The history of renewable energy trade irritants comes even as a group of 14 WTO members – including the EU, US, China, and South Korea – are engaged in talks to launch negotiations towards a trade deal that would slash tariffs on an agreed-upon list of environment-friendly products. Announced this year on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, participants are working through their respective domestic procedures before beginning formal talks. (See Bridges Weekly, [31 January 2014](#))

ICTSD reporting; "China hits EU with final duties on polysilicon," REUTERS, 30 April 2014.

DISPUTES

Russia Turns to WTO over EU Energy Package

Russia has filed a WTO complaint against the EU's energy sector regulations, officials confirmed last week. The move is expected to further sour the relationship between the two trading partners, who are already at odds over a series of other issues, including the crisis in Ukraine.

According to sources familiar with the consultations request, dated 30 April, Moscow claims that the EU's energy rules include discriminatory certification requirements for third countries. The bloc's measures concerning the production, supply, and transmission of natural gas or electricity are similarly in breach of international trade rules, Russia argues.

Moscow has reportedly referred to both the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), as well as the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. The request was not publicly available at the time of this writing, though it is expected to be released in the coming days.

The European Commission adopted its Third Energy Package – the rules in question – seven years ago, in a bid to promote a competitive EU-wide market for the sector. These policies came into effect in 2009.

Included in the bundle of legislation is a law prohibiting suppliers from owning distribution networks, such as pipelines. The policy has long been a source of frustration for Moscow, which has sought repeatedly to reach an agreement with Brussels on previous occasions, such as through a joint working group on energy.

The stakes are particularly high for Russian state-owned Gazprom, which already supplies more than a quarter of Europe's gas via its transnational pipelines. The company has further plans to build a 2400-kilometer-long "South Stream" oil distribution route across the Black Sea, bypassing Ukraine. For some EU members – notably a number from the ex-Soviet group – Gazprom is the sole supplier of gas.

EU member states remain divided over whether to green light the new pipeline, as well as over whether to scale up sanctions against Russia for its role in the Ukraine crisis. Moscow last week warned that further economic measures by the EU, together with the Kiev's US\$3.5-billion unpaid gas bill, could result in Gazprom shutting off energy supplies to Europe via Ukraine, as it did in 2006 and 2009.

Speaking with Interfax news agency, however, Russian trade official Maxim Medvedkov said that the consultations request was not connected with the recent Ukrainian crisis. "Our goal is not to sue Brussels just for the sake of it. We want to ensure a predictable environment for exports to the EU, in accordance with WTO rules," he said.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Günther Oettinger, the EU's energy commissioner, said that the Commission remained "relaxed" about the case at the global trade arbiter.

Under WTO rules, the two sides must now hold consultations for a minimum of 60 days in an effort to resolve the dispute amicably. Should these meetings not lead to a resolution, Russia may ask the WTO to establish a panel to hear the case.

Escalating trade tensions

Bilateral ties between the two sides have been severely strained over the past several months, due both to the situation in Ukraine, as well as a myriad of trade spats between the highly interconnected economies. Russia is the EU's third largest trading partner, while the EU is Russia's top trading partner.

Earlier in April, the EU criticised Russia at a meeting of the WTO's Council for Trade in Goods for allegedly not meeting the global trade body's rules.

"The overall experience with Russia as WTO member is, to our regrets, rather disappointing," [said](#) EU Ambassador Angelos Pangratis. "Russia has not shown willingness to put its trade measures in line with basic WTO obligations and has continued raising a number of trade obstacles inconsistent with its WTO obligations."

Since Russia joined the WTO in August 2012, the EU has lodged two formal requests for consultations with the newly-acceded member, out of the three total complaints that have been filed.

The first of these, regarding a recycling fee for vehicles that the EU claimed favoured cars produced in Russia and its two customs union partners – Belarus and Kazakhstan – over their foreign equivalents, is now at the panel stage. A similar complaint on the same subject was also filed by Japan, although Russia has subsequently revised the law in question.

In April, the EU filed another formal request for consultations with Russia over its blanket ban on imported pork products, in place since January of this year. Moscow maintains that the ban is necessary to protect its porcine industry from African swine fever (ASF) due to cases found in EU member states Lithuania and Poland. EU officials say the ban is unnecessary, given that only four ASF cases have been detected in those countries so far and the measures being taken to contain the virus. (See Bridges Weekly, [10 April 2014](#)).

Russia's first complaint at the global trade arbiter was also against the EU, targeting specifically a series of anti-dumping duties that the 28-nation bloc has imposed on certain Russian imports, and the cost adjustment methodologies to determine them. (See Bridges Weekly, [16 January 2014](#))

ICTSD reporting; "Russia files WTO case of EU energy rules," AFP, 1 May 2014; "Russia's South Stream gas pipeline to Europe divides EU," FINANCIAL TIMES, 4 May 2014; "Ukraine crisis hardens Brussels stance on Gazprom pipeline," FINANCIAL TIMES, 5 May 2014.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming Soon

12-19 May, online. E-DISCUSSION ON ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS. Co-led by the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the UN Global Compact, this online consultation will discuss partnership approaches that have proven effective for business engagement in sustainable development, with the goal of identifying those that can be used to advance the process for establishing a post-2015 development agenda. The consultation will also address how to develop government policies that drive corporate sustainability, how to mobilise private sustainability finance, and building trust through improved transparency and accountability. More information can be found at the event [website](#).

13 May, London, UK. CAN DEMOCRACY DELIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM BRAZIL, INDIA AND GHANA. This forum, hosted by the Overseas Development Institute, will discuss changing perceptions about the role and function of democracy. Using research from three leading democracies in the developing world, this event will examine whether and how these systems can deliver for their populations, and what this could mean for broader debates on institutions and development. For more information, visit the event [website](#).

16 May, Washington, US. TOOLS OF THE TRADE: CHINA E-COMMERCE AS EXPORT STRATEGY. This event, hosted by the Washington International Trade Association from 12PM-1:30PM EDT, will discuss China's growth in the online commerce market and what strategies US companies can and have used to capitalise on this trend. For more information, visit 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.

12 May: Committee on Customs Valuation

12-13 May: General Council

15 May: Committee on Market Access

Other Upcoming Events

19-20 May, Bonn, Germany. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WATER-ENERGY-FOOD NEXUS. This conference will address linkages between natural resource sectors, assessing available information and identifying knowledge gaps in order to help establish a joint strategy for human development and environmental sustainability. Themes to be addressed include: tools for the sustainable implementation of the water-energy-food nexus approach; governance and management; considering the

environment; and implementation strategies. More information can be found at the event [website](#).

3 June, Shah Alam, Malaysia. PLUGGING INTO GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS: ROLES OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT POLICY. This training workshop, hosted by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), aims to provide policymakers with a strong understanding of global value chains (GVCs) and their implications on economic development. Participants will also review how policy can help facilitate countries in capturing the benefits from participating in GVCs. For more information, visit the event [website](#).

18-19 June, Geneva, Switzerland. UNCTAD PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM. This annual outreach event by the UN Conference on Trade and Development will focus on how increasing inequality can create problems for sustainable development, with sub-themes on the "macroeconomic dimensions of inequality" and "from best policy practices to global transformation." This year's Symposium will also open with the Third Geneva Dialogue, part of a series of events where experts debate global economic issues, including the post-2015 development agenda. For more information, visit the event [website](#).

Resources

THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP AND THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF REGULATORY COOPERATION. By Alberto Alemann for the European Parliament Directorate General for External Policies – Policy Department (April 2014). This report examines the possible role of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) in forming a framework for future regulatory cooperation between the EU and US. In this context, the report examines potential parliamentary roles in this process and their implications for the EU legal order, concluding with recommendations designed to identify the most appropriate avenues for ensuring parliamentary involvement. The full report can be found [here](#).

A JAPANESE BREAKTHROUGH ON THE TPP? Produced by the Peterson Institute for International Economics (April 2014). In this webcast, Peterson Institute Senior Fellow Jeffrey J. Schott discusses how the tentative "path forward" in the US-Japan talks on agricultural tariffs – within the context of the broader Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations – needs further elaboration. He notes, however, that this could potentially pave the way for a broad accord later this year. The audio can be found [here](#).

MEETING CHINA'S GLOBAL RESOURCE NEEDS AND MANAGING SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS TO ENSURE SECURITY OF SUPPLY: SYNTHESIS REPORT. By S. Zadek, M. Forstater, H. Cheng, J. Potts, and G. Huppé for the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) (April 2014). This paper focuses on China's growing resource needs, noting that the management of sustainability impacts is essential toward avoiding supply disruptions. The authors therefore outline and test a commodity-by-commodity framework for assessing sustainability risks and vulnerability for importers, which is designed to be applied both at the micro and macro levels. The assessment methodology was tested through a desk study looking at copper and palm oil, with the two commodities being evaluated at both an enterprise and a national level. The full publication can be found [here](#).

THE STATE OF SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES REVIEW 2014: STANDARDS AND THE GREEN ECONOMY. By J. Potts, M. Lynch, A. Wilkings, G. Huppé, M. Cunningham, and V. Voora for the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) (March 2014). This paper provides an overview of market and performance trends across 16 of the most prevalent standards initiatives operating across ten commodity sectors. The authors aim to strengthen the understanding of how voluntary sustainability standards are developing over time, both in terms of the systems used and the resulting market impacts. The full report can be found [here](#).

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PUBLISHED BY



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Bridges Weekly Trade News is made possible
through generous contributions of donors and
partners including

DFID - UK Department for
International Development

SIDA - Swedish International
Development Agency

DGIS - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Contributors to this issue are Sofia Alicia Baliño,
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Weekly Trade News Digest is edited by Sofia
Alicia Baliño.

The Publisher and Director is Ricardo Meléndez-
Ortiz. The Editor in Chief is Andrew Crosby.
Comments and suggestions are welcomed and
should be directed to the [editor](#) or the [director](#).

Price: €10.00

ISSN 1563-0

