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WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WTO Chief Urges Members to Redouble Negotiating Efforts as July Deadline Approaches

The ongoing efforts to craft a Doha Round work programme have seen "positive engagement" in recent weeks, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said on Tuesday. However, the global trade chief warned that members need to "redouble" their efforts and start tackling certain "gateway issues" if they are to meet their July deadline.

"While progress has been difficult, this was clearly to be expected, and there are reasons to be positive," Azevêdo said at the 5 May meeting of the General Council, which is the organisation's highest decision-making body outside of the ministerial conference.

In the weeks and months ahead, members must now work on finding an overall balance across the various negotiating areas, Azevêdo continued, with the WTO chief reaffirming his statement from last week's Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) meeting that he would be looking at ways to facilitate talks on possible horizontal trade-offs.

Core areas

While the three core areas of this planned work programme are understood to be agriculture, non-agricultural market access (NAMA), and services, one of the concerns that has come to the fore over the past several weeks is the apparent *de facto* sequencing that has emerged between them.

At last week's TNC, Ambassador Remigi Winzap of Switzerland, who chairs the Negotiating Group on Market Access, noted that there is "difficulty for some members to conceive outcomes on NAMA market access in the absence of visible progress in agriculture."

Ambassador Gabriel Duque of Colombia, who chairs the services negotiations, said at the same meeting that some delegations similarly questioned at a recent open-ended discussion the need to advance the services talks, given the limited movement to date on agriculture and other Doha Round areas.

Meanwhile, New Zealand Ambassador John Adank, who chairs the agriculture trade talks, reported that his assessment of the overall situation in that negotiating area "is a sombre one."

"In key areas we are, as yet, far from convergence on certain threshold issues. This in turn inhibits progress on other issues," he said at the 27 April TNC meeting.

Among the more difficult areas, he said, were the discussions within the domestic support pillar of the agriculture talks, specifically over the nature and extent of disciplines on overall trade-distorting support, as well as how to treat *de minimis* support, seen as the most trade-distorting among WTO rules.

The debate over whether the negotiating area of rules – which covers disciplines relating to anti-dumping duties, subsidies, and countervailing duty measures, as well as fisheries subsidies – should also be considered a "core issue" remains unresolved, sources say.

A meeting of the rules negotiating group earlier this week saw members discuss what role that area should play, following an informal "refresher" session on the history of the talks. While Japan and fellow members of the Friends of Anti-Dumping Negotiations have tabled a paper on recalibrating the anti-dumping talks, proposing that core deliverables in this area be due process and transparency, Australia has suggested that this paper has set unrealistic goals.

Brazil, Canada, and India were among those saying at the rules meeting that this area cannot advance ahead of the three core issues, while the US reportedly said that it is difficult to determine what is "doable" in rules when it is unclear what will occur in agriculture, NAMA, and services.

Recalibration?

The ongoing debate over whether and how to "recalibrate" certain core areas of the Doha Round trade talks has seen little sign of resolution, with members sparring particularly over how much to build off of the past draft texts in agriculture and non-agricultural market access, known respectively as Rev. 4 and Rev. 3.

At last week's TNC, some officials, such as US Ambassador Michael Punke, repeated earlier warnings about the potential pitfalls of not recalibrating the ambition of the Doha Round talks.

"We cannot bury our head in the sand and wish reality away, and in April 2015, our choice is clear: either we adapt our collective expectations significantly and quickly, or the WTO must begin to confront the prospect of a definitive failure," Punke [said](#).

The US official specifically referred to the discussions on domestic agricultural support, acknowledging that Washington's call for other major agricultural subsidisers to sign onto new disciplines in the area of trade-distorting support may be difficult.

However, Punke questioned some members' push to adhere closely to the 2008 draft texts. "We find this misguided, since those texts never found consensus. And indeed the very reasons that prevented consensus in 2008 have grown more profound in the seven years since, namely the changed role of emerging economies."

In his [intervention](#) at last week's TNC, Chinese Ambassador Yu Jianhua countered that the negotiations should not move away from previous negotiating mandates, while calling for Rev. 4 and Rev. 3 to serve as the "basis and benchmark for negotiations."

"As a matter of principle, whatever the new approaches may be, it is always important to ensure all members to move in the same direction. In other words, we cannot afford

having a scenario where some members are given more flexibilities, while some other members are having less or even required to do more than what is required by the 2008 modalities," the Chinese official said, warning that this is indeed what is occurring in the domestic support pillar of the agriculture discussions.

China and India have been among those pushing back against the calls for recalibration in the Doha Round talks, citing concerns over the push by some members for so-called differentiation among developing countries.

Implementing Bali outcomes

With the December ministerial conference in Nairobi in their sights, one other element that has been deemed a potential determinant of its success is the level of progress in implementing the outcomes from the previous such meeting in Bali, Indonesia almost two years ago.

Along with reaching a formal agreement on trade facilitation, the December 2013 ministerial had yielded a series of decisions relating to agriculture and development issues.

The committee on rules of origin (ROO), for example, met last week to discuss the progress to date in implementing the Bali decision setting non-binding multilateral guidelines for WTO members in developing their ROO frameworks for least developed countries (LDCs).

At that meeting, Bangladesh submitted a paper on behalf of the LDC Group urging fellow WTO members to advance the implementation of that decision, outlining six specific questions to preference-giving countries on how they run their ROO schemes. (For more details on the ROO discussions, see Bridges Africa, [6 May 2015](#))

Another Bali outcome was a decision on putting into operation a previously-agreed waiver granting preferential treatment for LDCs services and services suppliers.

While only one country to date – Canada – has submitted a formal notification of the sectors and modes of supply where it will give preferential treatment, General Council Chair Fernando De Mateo, Mexico's WTO Ambassador, affirmed on Tuesday that other various members are working to complete their necessary domestic processes in order to submit their own notifications ahead of a July target.

Regarding the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, four members have submitted instruments of acceptance. For the deal to enter into force, at least two-thirds of the organisation's 161 members must ratify it domestically.

ICTSD reporting.

PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

EU Trade Chief Suggests New Investment Court Amid ISDS, Right to Regulate Debate

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström has called for the creation of a permanent multilateral court and appellate mechanism to arbitrate investment disputes, as part of a broader set of proposals on how to improve the functioning of the controversial investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism in trade deals.

The EU trade chief presented a [concept paper](#) outlining the proposed court and other reform ideas on Tuesday, ahead of a [meeting](#) with International Trade Committee (INTA) parliamentarians in Brussels on Wednesday that was set to discuss the ongoing negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US, as well as the direction of the 28-nation bloc's future trade strategy.

"Our new approach ensures that a state can never be forced to change legislation, only to pay fair compensation in cases where the investor is deemed to have been treated unfairly – suffered discrimination or expropriation, for example," Malmström said in a [blog post](#).

The proposals outlined in the paper, which is entitled "Investment in TTIP and beyond – the path for reform," focus on the main areas that were isolated as being in need of most improvement following a public consultation by the European Commission last year. The results of the consultation were released in January. (See Bridges Weekly, [15 January 2015](#))

"Eventually, what will be proposed in the TTIP context will set the standard for the further development of investment protection provisions and investment arbitration in EU investment negotiations. TTIP provides a unique opportunity for reforming and improving the system," the paper says.

The proposed global court, the paper suggests, could eventually replace the bilateral ISDS mechanism in the medium-term. This court, and its appellate system, would have the advantage of being able to apply to multiple deals among various partners, though the Commission noted that this will require building "a level of international consensus."

This plan should be pursued in tandem with establishing bilateral appeal mechanisms, with the proposed changes meant to serve as "stepping stones towards a permanent multilateral system for investment disputes."

Along with suggesting the creation of an international investment court and appellate mechanism, the paper also outlined reforms in the areas of the right to regulate; improving the establishment and functioning of arbitral tribunals; including an appellate mechanism; and addressing the relationship between ISDS and domestic courts.

The paper makes clear that nothing in it is with prejudice to the Commission's final position on this subject, and is meant to serve as a starting point for talks with EU parliamentarians as well as the Council.

The outcome of these discussions would frame the EU's negotiating position in this area, though when and whether Brussels may attempt to restart ISDS talks with Washington was not referred to explicitly in the concept paper.

Public debate

The prospect of including an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, along with other investment protections, in a final TTIP deal has sparked controversy on both sides of the Atlantic, with public debate honing in mainly on whether these provisions could harm a country's sovereign right to regulate in the public interest, particularly in areas such as public health and safety, or subject such policies to frivolous lawsuits from investors.

The negotiations on these specific subjects within TTIP were suspended by Brussels in early 2014 in order to hold this public consultation. For its part, Washington has consistently argued in favour of including such provisions in the final trade and investment deal, despite similar concerns being voiced by various civil society groups and members of the American public. (See Bridges Weekly, [23 January 2014](#))

Two of the trade deals that Brussels finished negotiating last year – one with Canada, the other with Singapore – included both investment protection and ISDS, raising questions over the possible TTIP implications.

In the position paper released Tuesday, the Commission outlined a series of improvements to ISDS that were made in the context of the Canada deal, which it said were examples of new innovations in substance and procedure already aimed at improving upon past iterations of this dispute settlement mechanism.

Both the deals with Canada and Singapore must still be ratified before entering into force. Though the negotiations have been completed, the agreement with Ottawa remains controversial, with questions being raised over the ISDS mechanism as well as other provisions, such as those relating to the protection of geographical indications.

Future trade strategy

Earlier this week, Malmström was in Washington to meet with US Trade Representative Michael Froman.

The talks are part of regular check-ins that the top trade officials have said will be a regular feature of the TTIP process, as part of a broader effort to give the lagging negotiations a "fresh start." This week's meeting came shortly following the ninth TTIP negotiating round. (See Bridges Weekly, [30 April 2015](#))

During a speech in Washington on 4 May, the same day she met with her US counterpart, Malmström noted the importance of the WTO, TTIP, and other trade deals in the 28-nation bloc's longer term plans. The European Commission is [set](#) to release this autumn a document that will outline its future trade strategy for the next five years.

"Doing a deal with our largest trade and investment partner will make a major contribution to expanding the amount of trade covered by ambitious trade rules," she [said](#) during a speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies Statesman's Forum, where she discussed the planned strategy revamp.

Furthermore, she added, the agreement could have a significant impact on areas such as protecting and strengthening shared values, testing new disciplines in areas such as regulatory cooperation, and improving the politics of trade by changing the ways of engaging with the public.

These three areas, together with maintaining the "broad geographical scope of [the EU's] trade agenda," are among the issues that this new strategy hopes to address.

ICTSD reporting.

EUROPEAN UNION

EU Strikes Draft Deal on 2019 Launch for Carbon Market Reserve

EU negotiators have struck a draft compromise on the launch date and operation of the 28-nation bloc's planned "carbon market stability reserve" (MSR) mechanism, which is now set to take effect from 1 January 2019.

The "agreement in principle" was reached on Tuesday after difficult negotiations between representatives from the EU institutions, capping a process that began early last year when the Commission put forward its [proposal](#) for such a mechanism.

"We have struck a good balance between an ambitious and effective reform of the ETS and strong guarantees for European energy-intensive industry to prevent carbon leakage," [said](#) Ivo Belet, the rapporteur for the ETS reform legislation in the European Parliament and a Belgian member of the European People's Party (EPP).

More stable prices?

The planned MSR aims to prop up the EU's struggling carbon market, which is the backbone of its Emissions Trading System (ETS). The mechanism would effectively act as a price buffer, removing excess emissions allowances from the EU carbon market based on set "trigger" thresholds and then putting these into a reserve. Those allowances could later be fed back into the system if the number of allowances on the market is too low.

The goal of this measure would be to stabilise carbon allowance prices, which have struggled to stay at levels high enough to encourage low-carbon technology investments and spur improvements in energy efficiency. After hitting a historic peak of €30 per tonne years ago, permit prices now hover at around €7 per tonne, only slightly higher than their €5 lows.

The EU ETS has been in place since 2005 and covers approximately 45 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from the bloc's 28 member states, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. The scheme works by capping the emissions allowed across the EU, then requiring companies to surrender allowances, or permits, for every tonne of GHGs emitted. These permits can also be traded among companies, either selling or buying them depending on their respective needs.

A few final procedural steps remain before the deal can be enacted. The consolidated text of the agreement must receive approval by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). The deal will then need to be formally adopted by the Council.

On the Parliament side, votes will be needed by both the Environment Committee and full plenary, which are expected in late May and early July, respectively.

Czech move breaks blocking minority

One of the main sticking points in the negotiations had been when exactly to launch the MSR, with previous suggested start dates ranging from end-2018 to 2021. The former had been backed by EU lawmakers in the Parliament's environment committee, while the latter had been signed off on by the European Commission and EU member states.

The final 2019 date was proposed by Latvia, which holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, after the Czech Republic reportedly left a "blocking minority" in the Council that was pushing for a later date. This minority had been led by Poland, which is heavily reliant on coal.

Along with setting the start date, the deal also says that the 900 million allowances that were "backloaded" from the 2014-2016 trading period to 2019-2020 would be placed on this market reserve.

Any unallocated allowances will be put directly in the market reserve in 2020. How these allowances are dealt with will be one of the elements under consideration during a planned ETS review. Furthermore, the upcoming EU ETS and market stability reserve review will need to take into account issues such as carbon leakage – where production is moved abroad to countries with lower environmental standards – and competitiveness aspects.

In elaborating their post-2020 climate and energy framework, EU heads of state and government had agreed last October that a "well-functioning, reformed" ETS with a market stabilising instrument would play a role in helping the bloc meet its emissions reduction targets for 2030. (See Bridges Weekly, [30 October 2014](#))

Environment groups react

News of the agreement was broadly welcomed by environmental groups, with some referring to it as a first step in what ideally will be a greater reform.

"European policymakers have come to the rescue to salvage the EU ETS from drowning in a huge oversupply of emission allowances," [said](#) Femke de Jong, policy officer at Brussels-based Carbon Market Watch.

The organisation has urged the Commission to make additional changes under the upcoming ETS review, such as putting in place a system for automatic removals of any unused allowances at the end of each trading period.

Damien Morris, who is the Head of Policy at the UK-based climate group Sandbag, also [termed](#) the decision as a "huge turning point for Europe's climate policy."

"But the policy is not out of the woods yet: key issues still need to be resolved during an overhaul of legislation expected later this year, the most important of which is the overall ambition of the emissions cap," Morris said, referring specifically to the need to tighten the existing limits.

ICTSD reporting; "EU Agrees to Overhaul Carbon-Trading System," THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, 5 May 2015; "EU carbon market reforms back on the table," FINANCIAL TIMES, 30 April 2015; "UPDATE 1-New EU proposal suggests Jan. 1, 2019 start for carbon market reform," REUTERS, 27 April 2015.

EU Commission Launches Partial Interim Review of China Solar Trade Deal

The European Commission has confirmed plans to start an investigation into the "minimum import price" that has served as the basis of the hard-won price undertaking deal between the EU and Chinese solar exporters, in a move that could bring long-standing tensions between the trading partners back to the fore.

[A notice](#) in the Official Journal of the European Union published on Tuesday announced a "partial interim review" of the benchmark used as a reference for the price undertaking deal. The products covered by the probe are imported crystalline silicon photovoltaic (PV) modules and key components that either originate or are consigned from China.

The price undertaking agreement was reached nearly two years ago between the European Commission, the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, and a group of Chinese exporting producers.

The 2013 deal came following a heated row between Brussels and Beijing over allegations that Chinese solar modules and their components were being dumped on the EU market – in other words, being sold at lower prices abroad than their normal value – and that the producers involved were receiving unfair state aid. (See Bridges Weekly, [5 September 2013](#))

Under the terms of the existing "price undertaking agreement," participating Chinese exporters are able to avoid steep anti-dumping and countervailing duties from the EU if they agree to respect minimum import prices. These must remove the injurious effects of dumping, among other conditions.

Those exporters not participating in the agreement are, however, subject to the duties that were determined by the Commission's anti-dumping and countervailing investigations in 2013. This deal and the existing duties are due to expire at the end of this year unless the EU executive moves to extend them.

"Sufficient" evidence

The Commission said on Tuesday that the applicant – the EU ProSun coalition of solar PV module producers – had provided sufficient evidence to justify launching a probe. This investigation would be limited to the benchmark that is used as a reference for the price undertaking mechanism.

The current benchmark is adjusted quarterly, based off of international spot prices of such modules – including Chinese prices – that are reported by the Bloomberg database. However, the terms of the price undertaking deal would also allow this benchmark to be determined excluding Chinese prices, if the relevant information is available via Bloomberg.

"The applicant provided [...] sufficient evidence that the circumstances on which the existing benchmark was accepted has changed and that these changes are of a lasting nature," the notice said. These changes included, for example, an increase in the number of Chinese companies reporting data, leading to those companies having increased weight in the determination of the benchmark.

Furthermore, these companies appear to be submitting prices that have “historically been lower” than those by other enterprises, the notice says. The probe therefore aims to determine whether the current benchmark remains representative of these modules’ prices.

Industry response

EU ProSun had announced its request for an investigation last week, claiming that Chinese exporters were actively trying to circumvent the current EU policies in place.

“Up to 30 percent of Chinese solar imports bypass EU import measures through fraudulent circumvention. European industry has already been devastated by illegal Chinese practices, and the EU and European governments have lost substantial tax revenues at a time of great need,” [said](#) Milan Nitzschke, President of EU ProSun and spokesman for German-based SolarWorld, which formally submitted the [request](#) for an investigation.

This is not the first attempt by EU ProSun to challenge Chinese producers’ compliance with the terms of the 2013 agreement. A previous request for an investigation had been filed in June 2014, only for the Commission to decide in August that there was not enough evidence to move forward. (See Bridges Weekly, [12 June 2014](#))

Meanwhile, other EU industry groups such as the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA) have instead urged the “return to a level playing field” between the EU and China on solar trade.

“European duties on Chinese solar products, and the associated price undertaking, are a likely factor in the slowdown in annual growth of installations in Europe,” the group [said](#) in a press release.

“EPIA is a strong supporter of free and fair trade and we would like to see trade relations between Europe and China, on solar modules and cells, return to normal undistorted, fair trade as soon as possible, when the duties and respective price undertaking expire in 2015,” said EPIA President Oliver Schaefer during a conference in Shanghai last week.

The partial interim investigation is set to be concluded within 15 months’ time, according to the European Commission. The Chinese government has already been invited to take part in “pre-initiation consultations” on the subject, with the EU executive also set to begin talks with the parties involved in the price undertaking agreement.

ICTSD reporting; “EU will not pursue SolarWorld’s claims of Chinese trade breaches,” SOLAR POWER PORTAL 21 August 2014; “EU to review China solar minimum price agreement,” PV-MAGAZINE, 6 May 2015.

AGRICULTURE

US Farm Subsidy Levels for Corn, Soya Draw Scrutiny from Brazil

The Brazilian government is reportedly considering whether to formally question – or even challenge – the level of US farm subsidies for corn and soya, with sources telling Bridges that Brasilia is collecting evidence on whether such support has increased since the enactment of Washington's 2014 Farm Bill.

Last year, Brazil posted its first trade deficit in over a decade, which has been attributed partly to falling soy prices. Domestic producers and government officials have reportedly expressed concern in recent months that increasing US subsidy levels in response to lower prices have negatively affected the soy sector, according to Brazilian newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo.

"Economic analysis already prepared shows that Brazil loses more than a billion US dollars in each product per year," trade and agriculture policy consultant Pedro Camargo Neto told Bridges. Camargo Neto is a former Brazilian agriculture negotiator and has been the head of various Brazilian agribusiness associations, including the Brazilian Pork Producers and Exporters Industry Association (ABIECS, by its Portuguese acronym).

Brazil is the largest global exporter of soybeans, with sales at US\$31 billion in 2014, or 10 percent of its total exports. The US, meanwhile, is the largest producer of soybeans, with Brazil a close second.

US farm subsidies

Compared with the previous legislation, the 2014 Farm Bill has eliminated or phased out direct payments to farmers, replacing them with new subsidy schemes that tie payments to market prices and yields, while expanding crop and revenue insurance subsidy programmes.

With the new legislation, US farmers are now allowed to choose from a suite of subsidised farm support programmes that help protect them from market volatility, which reduces some of the financial risk related to farming.

Farm support is now tied to recent and current production and market conditions. Some critics say that most of these new policy instruments are heavily-trade distorting and should be classified in the WTO's "amber box" of farm subsidies..

In the coming months, US farmers will need to choose between revenue or price-based coverage, which could give a clearer indication on the current and future subsidy levels and their effects on global markets.

"The new farm bill changed names and structure, but the distorting subsidies remain particularly now that prices are falling," Camargo Neto told Bridges.

In their joint [analysis](#) on the 2014 Farm Bill, Joseph W. Glauber, former chief economist at the US Department of Agriculture and a Visiting Senior Policy Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Patrick Westhoff, director of the Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, argued that "the bill could have important WTO implications."

They suggest that existing WTO limits on the current Aggregate Measure of Support (AMS), which includes all product-specific and non-product-specific agricultural support, would not be exceeded on average, though this could change depending on certain market conditions.

Other [studies](#), such as an ICTSD paper written by Montana State University agricultural economist Vincent Smith, suggest that while the new Farm Bill may involve larger subsidies for farmers, it is unlikely to cause problems for the US in meeting its current AMS commitments. *[Editor's note: ICTSD is the publisher of Bridges.]*

Towards another Brazil-US trade dispute?

A formal WTO dispute has not yet been launched by Brazil, though recent media [reports](#) indicate that Brasilia is closely monitoring US subsidy levels and their effects on global farm markets and may question Washington during the next meeting of the WTO's Committee on Agriculture, scheduled for next month.

June will also see Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff make her long-anticipated state visit to Washington, though whether the subsidy issue will be raised was not clear at the time of this writing.

There are several factors that could be brought into a trade dispute, Glauber told Bridges in an emailed response. "The Brazil cotton case obviously presents a blueprint on how to argue a violation of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures," he continued, referring to the WTO's rules on treating subsidies, while qualifying that a dispute panel would likely need to review the specifics of the case and commodity involved.

A recent [study](#) by the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock estimates that under current market conditions, US soy subsidies could reach US\$19.2 billion, which they project could bring down global soy prices by two to four percent, thus lowering Brazil's annual soy export revenue.

A US official told Bridges that Washington's subsidy policies are transparent and have shown no indication of violating existing global trade rules.

ICTSD reporting; "Brazil takes aim at U.S. Farm Subsidies as Rousseff readies visit," REUTERS, 30 April 2015; "Produtores de soja estudam ação na OMC contra EUA," 20 February 2015.

PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

EU, ASEAN Consider Trade Talks Reboot

The EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are planning to explore the option of resuming their long-stalled region-to-region trade talks, officials from both sides confirmed late last month.

A meeting between senior officials from both blocs is now planned for the end of the year "to take stock and explore the way forward and report back to the ministers," according to a joint media [statement](#) released following a meeting last week between ASEAN Economic Ministers and EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"The EU is committed to have a region-to-region free trade agreement," Malmström told reporters afterward, according to comments reported by EurActiv. "It is important that we get it right and that is why we proposed this roadmap, a stock-taking event by the end of the year."

In a [speech](#) in Washington earlier this week, the EU trade chief again referred to a possible agreement with ASEAN— along with examining whether to reboot talks with other individual members of the 10-country group — as one element of the Commission's future trade strategy, which is due to be released this autumn.

The EU is one of ASEAN's top trading partners, accounting for nearly 10 percent of ASEAN's total trade and for 21.3 percent of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to the region. Total bilateral trade between ASEAN and the EU reached US\$248.2 billion last year.

The move to reconsider the trade talks comes as ASEAN, a group that consists of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, is working to establish a formal economic community — involving, among other things, a single market — by the end of 2015. (See Bridges Weekly, [5 February 2015](#))

Prolonged stall

Negotiations for a region-to-region deal began in 2007 but stalled in 2009, leading the EU to begin talks with some of ASEAN's individual members in the interim. For instance, the EU inked a trade and investment deal with Singapore last year, and is currently in talks with Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. (See Bridges Weekly, [23 October 2014](#))

Talks between the EU and Malaysia, which launched in 2010, stalled two years ago, though Malmström also [called](#) last week for a resumption of talks as long as it is clear "that both sides are ready to do a deal."

The EU and Thailand held their fourth round last April, while the EU's [twelfth round](#) of talks with Vietnam took place in March in Hanoi, with the next such meeting tentatively set for June in Brussels.

ICTSD reporting; "EU and ASEAN to Jumpstart Trade Agreement Talks," EURACTIV, 27 April 2015; "EU Set to Resume Free-Trade Talks at ASEAN Summit," DW, 26 April 2015; "EU to Re-Open South-Asian Trade Talks," EUOBSERVER, 27 April 2015; "What Did the 26th ASEAN Summit Achieve?" THE DIPLOMAT, 28 April 2015.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming Soon

7 May, Geneva, Switzerland. TALKING DISPUTES: THE US-TUNA II (MEXICO) COMPLIANCE DISPUTE. This event, hosted by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and WTI Advisors, will focus on the recent WTO compliance panel report in the US-Mexico dispute over dolphin-safe tuna labelling. The event, part of an ongoing series, brings together experts and interested professionals for a discussion on specific WTO cases. The meeting will also be broadcast live. More information is available at the event [website](#).

11 May, Washington, US. STATE OF PLAY: TPP. Barbara Weisel, Assistant US Trade Representative, will speak on the current Transpacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. Weisel is the US chief negotiator for the TPP and develops and implements US trade policy with countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. There will also be a panel discussion and question-and-answer period. The event is hosted by the Washington International Trade Association (WITA). For more information, please visit the event [website](#).

11-17 May, Dakar, Senegal. 2015 GLOBAL LAND FORUM. This biennial event, organised by The Land Coalition and CICODEV Africa, will highlight the theme of "Land governance for inclusive development, justice and sustainability: time for action." With a focus on land issues both in Africa and globally, it will include plenary sessions, workshops, and a "Marketplace of Ideas" to discuss poverty reduction, food security, environmental sustainability, and human wellbeing and dignity. It will be attended by practitioners, land-users, activists, policy makers, and researchers. For more information about this event, please visit this [website](#).

11 May, London, UK. TOWARDS PARIS: THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY. This event will feature a lecture by Robert Keohane, Professor of International Affairs at Princeton University, on the effects of international cooperation on global climate change policy including geo-engineering, solar radiation management, and emission curbs. In advance of the December UN climate talks in Paris, he will argue that for a more successful version of the Kyoto Protocol to emerge, there must be a shift of US domestic politics from passive resistance to a demand for action. For more information, please visit the event [website](#).

11-13 May, Geneva, Switzerland. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT, MULTI-YEAR EXPERT MEETING ON TRADE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT, THIRD SESSION. This session will focus on creating best-fit practices for the development and access to services in line with the Doha Mandate. Issues discussed will include how services and services trade contribute to the post-2015 sustainable development goals, what constrains the development of services and services trade, how policies and regulations affect services, how developing services enterprises can be competitive, how to ensure universal access to essential services, how to approach trade liberalisation, and what data is necessary for informed policymaking. For more information about this event, please visit the event [website](#).

12-14 May, Copenhagen, Denmark. SECOND EUROPEAN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION CONFERENCE. This conference, organised by research projects Base, Ramses, and ToPDad, will meet under the theme "Integrating climate adaptation action in science, policy, practice and business." Talks will highlight various aspects of the climate

discussion, including the latest research, policy strategies, costs, and implementation, and facilitating public-private partnerships. For more information about this event, please visit this [website](#).

12 May, Paris, France. TOWARDS A NEW SILK ROAD? ASSESSING CHINA'S NEW INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA. Hosted by the Institut Français des Relations Internationales, this seminar will feature a discussion on China's growing interdependence since the financial crisis of 2008, to include issues of political instability in the region, the Sino-Russian relationship, the Sino-Central Asian relationship, and how Beijing addresses minority populations with nationalist aspirations. For more information, please visit this [website](#).

12-13 May, Washington, US. ENERGY EFFICIENCY GLOBAL FORUM 2015. Hosted by the Alliance to Save Energy, the second Energy Efficiency Global Forum will discuss the latest energy technology and information to help in developing and implementing energy efficient policies. It will consist of plenary sessions, executive dialogues, workshops, and networking events. It will be attended by energy efficiency executives and policymakers. For more information, please visit this [website](#).

13 May, London, UK. RISKS TO THE US AND GLOBAL ECONOMIES. During this event, Robert Rubin, former US Secretary of the Treasury, will discuss the management of risk for sustainable economic growth. Topics will include tail risk, shadow banking, and the potential danger of economic booms. The event is part of a series entitled "US and European Perspectives on Common Economic Challenges," which is sponsored by Chatham House and Bank of America Merrill Lynch. For more information about this event, please visit this [website](#).

14 May, Washington, US. COMMITTING TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CAN A LONG TERM AGOA EXTENSION BE TRANSFORMATIVE? US Congressman Todd Young, a Republican from the state of Indiana, will speak about the views of congressional lawmakers on the renewal of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Young is a part of the legislative effort to extend AGOA and represented the US House Ways and Means Committee at the Summit of African Leaders. The keynote speech will be followed by a panel discussion on the effect of a 10-year AGOA extension on sub-Saharan countries. The event is organised by the Washington International Trade Association (WITA). For more information, please visit this [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.

8 May: Committee of Participants on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products

20 May: Dispute Settlement Body

21 May: Committee on Customs Valuation

Other Upcoming Events

20-21 May, The Hague, The Netherlands. INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CHARTER MINISTERIAL. During this two-day event, those delegations that are authorised to approve/sign the International Energy Charter will do so during this ministerial conference.

This document serves as a declaration of political intent, with the goal of improving energy cooperation among those who have signed it. The charter was negotiated among approximately 80 states throughout 2014. To learn more about this event, please visit the International Energy Charter's [website](#).

10 June, Bonn, Germany. TECHNOLOGY IN THE 2015 PARIS AGREEMENT. This event, hosted by ICTSD and the European Patent Office, will be convened on the sidelines of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) annual mid-year meetings in Bonn. The discussions will feature presentations of research mapping out different positions and proposals on technology, as well as possible options for achieving progress, within the context of the preparations for the UNFCCC's 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris this December. More information on the event is available at the ICTSD [website](#).

30 June – 2 July, Geneva, Switzerland. FIFTH GLOBAL REVIEW OF AID FOR TRADE: REDUCING TRADE COSTS FOR INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH. This event, hosted at WTO headquarters, will focus on the various actions underway to reduce trade costs, at levels ranging from the national, bilateral, regional, and multilateral, as well as the private sector and non-governmental. Participants will be asked to consider which actors are involved in what; how the issue of trade costs is being addressed by national governments and regional organisations in their planning; and whether sufficient progress has been made, and if not, how to improve it. To learn more, visit the WTO [website](#).

30 September – 2 October, Geneva, Switzerland. WTO PUBLIC FORUM: TRADE WORKS. This year's WTO Public Forum comes as the global trade body celebrates its 20th anniversary. The theme of "Trade Works" will focus on the contribution that global trade cooperation over the past two decades has made to the world economy. Participants interested in organising an event at the Forum are asked to submit their proposals by 1 June. More information on the event is available at the WTO [website](#).

20-21 October, Doha, Qatar. WORLD EXPORT DEVELOPMENT FORUM: SUSTAINABLE TRADE – INNOVATE, INVEST, INTERNATIONALIZE. The 15th edition of the International Trade Centre (ITC)'s flagship event will be hosted by Qatar's Ministry of Economy and Commerce through the Qatar Development Bank (QDB) under the theme "Sustainable trade: Innovate, invest, internationalize." The event will bring together policymakers, representatives of trade support institutions, and business leaders against the backdrop of the post-2015 development agenda, with talks focusing on ways to unlock the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises, women, and youth. More information can be found [here](#).

Resources

FISCAL POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA: LESSONS AND LEGACIES OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS. Published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (April 2015). Looking at case studies of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, this staff discussion note examines why Latin American countries, despite their strong growth and buoyant commodity revenues, have not been able to rebuild fiscal space after the financial crisis. The authors address how fiscal buffers can be rebuilt going forward, and calls for greater efficiency in public spending, among other recommendations.. The report is available [here](#).

TRUST, VOICE, AND INCENTIVES: LEARNING FROM LOCAL SUCCESS STORIES IN SERVICES DELIVERY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. Published by the World Bank (April 2015). With a focus on education and health, this report argues that weak accountability can undermine policy implementation designed to support service delivery performance. The authors use local level case studies to demonstrate the need for strong local leadership and institutionalised incentives for better service delivery performance. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

WHAT HAS CAPITAL LIBERALIZATION MEANT FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STATISTICS. Written/edited by Robert M. Heath for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (April 2015). This working paper examines the impact of more liberal capital flows on the evolution of economic and financial statistics, including the growing need for transparency, standardisation, new data sets, and statistical governance. It argues that although the past two decades have been a revolution in the field as a result of liberalised capital flows, greater transparency is still essential. The full report can be downloaded [here](#).

AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: A VALUE CHAIN PERSPECTIVE. By Miet Maertens and Johan Swinnen Ku Leuven for the World Trade Organization (April 2015). This working paper examines current global and agricultural food trade, reviewing its rapid growth and structural changes, the increased consolidation in food supply chains, the proliferation of public and private food standards, food price volatility, and increased vertical coordination. The authors examine the implications of such trends for developing countries, both for their participation in international agricultural trade as well as for economic development, income mobility, and poverty reduction.. The report can be downloaded from the WTO [website](#).

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