

BRIDGES WEEKLY

Global trade news from a sustainable development perspective

VOLUME 22, ISSUE 12, 12 APRIL 2018

GLOBAL ECONOMY

IMF Chief Calls On Countries to
Ward Off Protectionist
Pressures1

GLOBAL ECONOMY

Chinese President Issues
Defence of Multilateralism,
Pledges Economic Reforms.....4

TRADE AGREEMENTS

NAFTA Countries Weigh Timing
for Deal "In Principle"7

ASIA-PACIFIC

ASEAN Finance Officials Eye
Greater Integration, Push for
Infrastructure Investment.....10

BREXIT

EU, UK Negotiators Begin Prep
for Next Chapter in Brexit Talks.12

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Vacancies.....14

Events14

Resources16

GLOBAL ECONOMY

IMF Chief Calls On Countries to Ward Off Protectionist Pressures

The head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned on Wednesday 11 April of looming uncertainty in the global economy, suggesting that even amid recently strong economic growth, countries must do more to stave off instability and risk, particularly by avoiding protectionist pressures.

[Speaking in Hong Kong](#) just days before the IMF and the World Bank Group hold their Spring Meetings, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde suggested that the time is right for countries to pursue economic reforms proactively, given positive growth prospects.

"We see global momentum – driven by stronger investment, a rebound in trade, and favourable financial conditions – which is encouraging companies and households to increase their spending," she said. Lagarde also previewed the IMF's upcoming growth estimates, due to be released next week in tandem with the Spring Meetings, suggesting that the Fund "continue[s] to be optimistic."

However, she also told audience members that the rules-based international trading system "is now in danger of being torn apart" – suggesting that this outcome, should it come to pass, would constitute "an inexcusable, collective policy failure."

Lagarde also questioned the increased focus in current political debate on trade deficits. Washington officials under the current Trump administration have been vocal about their interest in reducing trade deficits with major partners, conducting reviews of agreements where such deficits exist and seeking renegotiations of existing accords to rectify alleged imbalances.

"Discussions about trade restrictions are often bound up with the concept of trade deficits and surpluses. Some people argue that these imbalances indicate unfair trade practices," Lagarde noted.

"Yes, there are unfair practices – which must be eliminated – and which can leave their mark on trade balances between two countries. But in general, these bilateral

imbalances are a snapshot of the division of labour across economies, including global value chains," she continued, also suggesting that "unfair" trade practices have little to do with "a country's overall trade deficit with the rest of the world."

She referred to Washington and Berlin as examples where a different approach could prove useful. For example, she suggested that fiscal measures could be more productive for the US' purposes than tariffs, saying these could include steps to curb government expenditure and improve revenue generation.

Lagarde also highlighted other potential risks, such as burgeoning public debt, large government deficits, and insufficient safeguards for financial systems. She also made specific reference to the need for improving intellectual property rights (IPR) protections and "reducing the distortions of policies that favour state enterprises," without naming any particular country in this respect.

The Spring Meetings in the US capital city next week are expected to feature high-profile debates over the current macroeconomic context, particularly on trade. The 16-22 April event has as its theme "Meeting Global Aspirations and Challenges" and includes within its packed schedule meetings on technology and the digital economy, carbon pricing, and the gender divide.

The IMF-WBG meetings are held biannually and provide a forum for finance and development ministers from their 189 member countries, among others, to address opportunities and risks to the global economy and development prospects, along with potential reforms to the two organisations.

The steering bodies for both agencies meet during those events, which also coincide with the release of new economic growth projections, seminars on key macroeconomic and development topics, networking among top officials, and informal meetings of key country groups, including finance ministers and central bank governors from the G20.

Trade tensions in the background

Indeed, the past few months have seen a ratcheting up in trade tensions among some of the world's largest economies, with national leaders and intergovernmental organisations warning against an escalation in tensions and the proliferation of unilateral trade measures. Should countries fail to heed these warnings, they warn, the implications could be severely damaging for the global economy.

Among the more high-profile of these trade developments was the US move to enact global tariffs on imported steel and aluminium, citing national security grounds. Those duties are now in place, minus a selected group of countries which have received a temporary exemption from the US, currently set to last through 1 May unless other deals are reached.

In addition, the prospect of US tariffs on various Chinese products, among other measures, in response to alleged intellectual property rights concerns has fuelled a public row between officials in Washington and Beijing. These US steps are under a "Section 301" action, named for the provision under the 1974 Trade Act which delineates possible steps the US executive can take to ensure "relief from unfair trade practices," following an investigation and in line with specific requirements. (See Bridges Weekly, [22 March 2018](#))

The US published a proposed list covering 1300 tariff lines of Chinese goods, which could end up facing hefty tariffs as part of these "Section 301" actions. The move has since drawn a public rebuke from China, which has said that while it prefers to address the issue via the WTO, they are also preparing other contingency measures. Meanwhile, Washington is now examining whether more actions under "Section 301" might be warranted.

"The US, regardless of China's solemn protest, has released the groundless proposed tariff list. This is a typical action of unilateralism and trade protectionism which China strongly condemns and opposes," [said](#) a spokesperson from China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) last week.

"The US' approach has seriously violated the basic principles and spirit of the WTO. China intends to immediately appeal to the WTO dispute settlement mechanism for the US' practices," the spokesperson continued, adding that Beijing is concurrently putting together "measures of equal strength and scale on the US products according to the relevant provisions of the Foreign Trade Law of the People's Republic of China."

China has since filed the above-mentioned WTO challenge, submitting a request for consultations last week focused on the proposed list of products. Separately, China has also launched a WTO dispute on the steel and aluminium tariffs.

"President Xi and I will always be friends, no matter what happens with our dispute on trade. China will take down its Trade Barriers because it is the right thing to do. Taxes will become Reciprocal & a deal will be made on Intellectual Property. Great future for both countries!" [said](#) US President Donald Trump on social media site Twitter last week.

A full report on the outcomes of the IMF-WBG Spring Meetings will be featured in a future edition of Bridges.

ICTSD reporting.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

Chinese President Issues Defence of Multilateralism, Pledges Economic Reforms

Chinese President Xi Jinping laid out an agenda of economic measures that touched on trade, investment, and intellectual property rights during a high-profile [speech](#) on Tuesday 10 April in Boao, China, while also issuing a defence of the multilateral, rules-based order.

The speech was delivered at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum, an annual meeting held in the island province of Hainan that had as this year's theme "An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity." The event traditionally brings together leaders and top officials from across government and the private sectors. While Xi's speech has dominated headlines, other regional leaders have also addressed the forum this week, including Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Xi's speech comes at a pivotal juncture in domestic political developments, amid a recent change to the country's constitution that will allow the Chinese leader the option of remaining president longer than his previous term limit of 2023.

The speech also coincides with a volatile period in international economic policy, including heightened tensions among some of the world's largest traders.

Xi: China's global role key for growth

After first outlining some of the major developments seen over the past four decades – the period since the country began enacting a series of landmark economic reforms referred to as "socialism with Chinese characteristics" – Xi then defended Beijing's leading role in safeguarding major multilateral institutions and key regional initiatives of financial significance.

"China has demonstrated its role as a big country in its opening to the outside world. It has gone from introduction to going global, from joining the World Trade Organization to building the 'Belt and Road,' and has made significant contributions to coping with the Asian financial crisis and the international financial crisis. It has contributed to the world's economic growth for many years in a row," said Xi, according to an informal translation of his remarks.

He also flagged development as a top priority for his government, along with deepening economic ties with other nations.

One of the statements which drew the most notice from trade watchers and media pundits was Xi's repeated pledge that China would "not engage in a zero-sum game" with "the rest of the world," without referring to any country or country groups directly. Xi also said that his country would "not engage in power bullying."

The Chinese leader also highlighted the role that international steering groups, such as the G20 coalition of major advanced and emerging economies, could play going forward. The G20 is now reaching a key milestone, namely the 10-year anniversary since the dawn of the global financial crisis, which prompted the group to undergo a massive transition and begin leaders' level meetings to improve its coordination efforts and shore up the global economy.

Xi also noted the value of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum as a model for cooperation, referring to the 21-country regional grouping which has looked to boost intra-regional trade, investment, and economic growth, and eventually craft a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). That shared goal is one that China has advocated for repeatedly since it was first raised 12 years ago. APEC members have conducted a “strategic study” on the possible trade deal and have pledged to continue work towards reaching this objective.

Xi also called for ensuring the protection of the multilateral trading system and promoting “economic globalisation toward more open, inclusive, balanced, and win-win development” while also looking ahead to the future evolutions of the technological and business landscape.

Other key priorities for Beijing, according to the Chinese leader, include continued efforts towards ensuring a transition towards a low-carbon economy with sustainability and environmental protection at its core, given the importance of safeguarding those resources for future generations.

Trade, intellectual property rights in focus

Xi also outlined four major categories for future reforms, specifically in terms of improving market access; creating an enabling climate for investment; improving the protection of intellectual property rights; and working to scale up China's imports of foreign-made goods.

The timing of these policy changes was not clear at press time, nor was the scope of some proposed measures, and how trading partners might interpret the moves remains uncertain. However, the tone, timing, and scope of the speech has been weighed against Xi's famous speech at the 2017 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, last year, and against the shift in geopolitics seen under the new US administration.

Some of these categories include specific references to automobile goods trade, with the pledge to slash tariffs on imported automobiles and to cut back on existing curbs involving foreign capital shares for that same sector. US President Donald Trump has [publicly complained](#) that Beijing imposes tariffs of up to 25 percent on imported cars.

Also on the trade front, Xi indicated that China would continue trying to become a party to the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), a plurilateral agreement among a subset of WTO members aimed at liberalising access for foreign suppliers to bid for government contracts and establishing a set of related rules.

Beijing has been negotiating to join since 2002, in line with commitments made when it became a WTO member in 2001, and some estimates suggest that bringing the Asian economy on board would add billions or even trillions of dollars to the accord's value, given China's massive market.

China has submitted six proposals to join the GPA, with the latest being in December 2014. While GPA parties have welcomed efforts to increase the ambition of each offer, several of them have pushed Beijing to expand its coverage further in its next submission, including with state-owned enterprises, and to do so shortly in order for parties to resume negotiations.

Intellectual property rights were also on the agenda, with Xi pledging that China will do more to curb illicit activities, boost law enforcement, and help facilitate cooperation in this field between foreign-owned and domestic firms.

China's intellectual property rights (IPR) regime has come under heightened international scrutiny over the past month, in light of the US moving towards taking a series of actions to address allegations of forced technology transfers and other IPR concerns.

The issue has stoked tensions between the two trading giants, both for the subject matter itself and for the US' use of a "Section 301" investigation from a 1970s era trade law to do so. (See Bridges Weekly, [22 March 2018](#))

The planned policy changes drew a public welcome from US President Donald Trump, who wrote on social media site [Twitter](#) on Tuesday that he was "very thankful for President Xi of China's kind words on tariffs and automobile barriers... also, his enlightenment on intellectual property and technology transfers. We will make great progress together!"

ICTSD reporting.

TRADE AGREEMENTS

NAFTA Countries Weigh Timing for Deal "In Principle"

Negotiators working to update the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are looking at whether they could announce an agreement "in principle" within the coming weeks, though various media outlets suggest that this goal will not be reached in time for a high-level regional leaders' summit this weekend.

Clinching a deal would involve a significant scale-up in negotiating pace, given that only six of the planned 30 chapters of an updated NAFTA were completed at the time of the last round's conclusion in early March. (See Bridges Weekly, [8 March 2018](#))

The US had reportedly been pushing to announce such a deal in time for the Summit of the Americas in Peru, set for 13-14 April, but has since reconsidered that timeframe following ministerial-level meetings in Washington last week and continued technical work set for this week.

The upcoming summit will allow top officials from the three NAFTA countries to meet, though US President Donald Trump will be represented by Vice President Mike Pence. The other two NAFTA partners will be represented at leaders' level, with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto confirmed to attend.

Trump [said](#) on Monday that countries are "fairly close" to a deal, according to comments reported by Bloomberg. The US leader has, however, left open the door to withdrawing from the deal if negotiations do not meet his standards. (See Bridges Weekly, [4 May 2017](#))

Ildefonso Guajardo Villareal, Mexican Economy Secretary, who is leading his country's work in the negotiations, [said](#) there is "a very high probability – 80 percent," of concluding an agreement "in principle" by the first week of May. In an extensive interview with Mexico's broadcast network Televisa, Guajardo said that flexibility in the weeks ahead will play a key role in determining the talks' success or failure.

Commenting on whether the talks could falter, Guajardo said that one "cannot ensure absolutely anything, because there is an unpredictable factor."

"We are within weeks of knowing if the NAFTA talks close with success," he added.

Pushing for a deal

The political calendars in the NAFTA countries are placing an additional onus on negotiators to wrap up a modernised accord in the short-term, given that US voters will go to the polls for congressional midterm elections in early November, while Mexico will hold its general election this summer.

The US administration has confirmed that it hopes to see the current Congress vote on the deal, rather than the Congress due to be sworn in this coming January. To meet this timeframe, however, there are set requirements under US Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) that will need to be met. (See Bridges Weekly, [8 March 2018](#))

TPA, known colloquially as “fast track,” is a law that, among other provisions, gives the US executive the authority to negotiate trade deals. It also enables Congress to endorse or oppose completed trade deals in a straight up-or-down vote, no amendments, subject to certain requirements. Additionally, it sets negotiating objectives for those accords and rules for consultations with Congress and public transparency.

The current legislation, enacted in 2015, has firm timelines for the congressional notification and publication of trade deals before signature and ratification. The law's formal name is the [Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015](#).

For example, TPA requires the President to give Congress at least 90 days' notice before entering into a new trade agreement, and publicly release the text of the renegotiated accord at least 60 days before that same date. There are other deadlines for notifying of any necessary administrative actions to implement the trade deal, along with requirements to make the trade deal text and supporting information public.

Any deal would require the approval of Congress before it can become law – a process that has traditionally taken several months or even years.

In testimony to Congress in mid-March, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer [said](#) his team of deputies would continue making the NAFTA negotiations a priority, and that his office also plans to “aggressively pursue free trade agreements.” Since then, his office and the Seoul trade ministry have confirmed a deal in principle under separate negotiations to amend the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA). (See Bridges Weekly, [29 March 2018](#))

Regarding NAFTA, “I have urged our trading partners to recognise that time is short if we are to complete a deal in time for consideration by this Congress,” said Lighthizer.

The TPA legislation itself is due to expire later this year, though lawmakers are expected to allow its renewal. The current iteration expires on 1 July and Lighthizer has confirmed that the Trump administration will be looking to extend it for an additional three years. Trump [issued](#) a request to do so in mid-March.

With Mexico eyeing elections on 1 July, it is yet unclear how the new Mexican leader would view the NAFTA process. The presidential frontrunner, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has been a vocal critic of some of the Trump administration's policy approaches. However, he has told the Bloomberg media outlet that he shares Trump's views on working to raise wages in Mexico.

Remaining issues

Although officials from the NAFTA countries have reported progress in recent rounds, negotiators will need to craft creative solutions to address some sensitive topics, particularly in contentious areas such as dispute settlement and rules of origin for cars. (See Bridges Weekly, [8 March 2018](#))

On negotiations for calculating rules of origin for automobile trade, the US is reportedly considering other options for meeting its goals for revised regional and domestic content thresholds. Washington is said to be open to calculating the value of a car in a way that incorporates factors such as higher wages and research and development costs.

Late last year, Washington had proposed upping current regional and domestic content requirements significantly in order for automobiles to benefit from preferential treatment under NAFTA. For example, the US had called for 85 percent of a typical vehicle's content to be North American-made, up from the current 62.5 percent, with 50 percent from the US.

Another issue is the US' proposal for adding in a "sunset" clause to NAFTA, which would mean that countries would have to agree periodically to extend the agreement. Currently, countries are considering some sort of review mechanism that is not linked to termination, [according to](#) sources cited by Canada's Business News Network (BNN).

Other issues include government procurement market access among the NAFTA countries, as well as how negotiators will address the US' requests to eliminate Chapter 19 dispute settlement on trade remedies and Chapter 11 investor-state dispute settlement. Those requests have drawn intense pushback from Canadian and Mexican negotiators, leaving their future unclear.

ICTSD reporting; "Trump Skipping Peru Is Latest Signal Nafta Deal Isn't Imminent," BLOOMBERG, 10 April 2018; "Guajardo: 80% de probabilidad para acuerdo TLCAN; podría mejorar tipo de cambio," TELEVISA NEWS, 9 April 2018; "Trump Has an Unlikely Ally on Wages: Mexico's Leftist Candidate," BLOOMBERG, 9 April 2018; "Cars, cows, and a half-sunset: Here's how NAFTA 2.0 could look," BNN, 9 April 2018.

ASIA-PACIFIC

ASEAN Finance Officials Eye Greater Integration, Push for Infrastructure Investment

Finance ministers and central bank governors from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) stressed the importance of building on strong economic growth figures during their annual meeting last week, while highlighting the value of trade, investment, financial integration, and infrastructure towards meeting that objective.

The meeting was held on 6 April in Singapore. The city-state currently holds the position of chair of the bloc, and has outlined an agenda highlighting growth, resilience, and innovation. (See Bridges Weekly, [18 January 2018](#))

The ASEAN group, which is comprised of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam with Papua New Guinea as an observer, was founded in 1967 and aims to promote growth, collaboration, and peace between the member countries.

In addition to ASEAN member states, representatives from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank Group were also in attendance at the finance meet.

Infrastructure and sustainable growth

In his opening [remarks](#), Singapore Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat delineated Singapore's chairmanship objectives. In terms of growth, he cited an estimate from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued last October that found that ASEAN's collective economic growth improved by 5.1 percent in 2017, while noting that more work remained to ensure sustained economic improvements.

The finance head presented data on infrastructure investment needs, insisting on the value of public-private partnerships to raise the necessary funds.

"The ADB estimates that, for the 15-year period from 2016 to 2030, ASEAN's infrastructure investment needs will total US\$2.8 trillion (or US\$184 billion per annum). We will need to work to better mobilise private capital. In fact, neither government alone or private sector alone can meet all the needs. But I think working together, we can make some progress," Heng said.

These statements came [a day after](#) the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) adopted its [Strategy on Private Capital Mobilisation](#) on 5 April. Through its plan, AIIB sets out the sequence of activities it will use to develop and incentivise private partnerships and execute high quality transactions. ASEAN expects to collaborate with AIIB to pursue infrastructure funding, according to the [joint statement](#) from ASEAN finance ministers last week.

The AIIB, founded in 2016, works to link people, services, and markets both in the region and more broadly, specifically through investment in infrastructure needs across Asia, including sustainable infrastructure and energy. It will hold its next annual meeting from 25-26 June in Mumbai, India.

Another area of growth that the Singaporean finance chief highlighted was in [ASEAN Green Bond Standards \(GBS\)](#). The ASEAN Capital Markets Forum launched these standards last year. The programme works to generate increased “green” investment to support sustainable growth in the region, especially in funding infrastructure. Using “internationally accepted” practices, the standards seek to guide this sector to enhance transparency, consistency, and uniformity.

“We will build on the ASEAN Green Bond Standards launched last year by the ASEAN Capital Markets Forum (ACMF) to encourage more green bond issuances, as well as other modes of sustainable finance, within ASEAN,” Heng said in his opening address.

Regional integration

ASEAN continues to work on internal integration, with working groups making progress across various items, including the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity in 2025 and negotiations under the ASEAN Banking Integration Framework (ABIF). In addition, the finance leaders stated that the ASEAN member states are close to concluding a trade in services agreement for financial services.

Ministers underscored the importance of the implementation of the [ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025](#), which was adopted in 2015. The plan, which calls for eliminating tariffs, liberalising investment, and narrowing the development gap among other goals, aims to deepen the region's integration across multiple levels.

“We reaffirm our commitment to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025, including its strategic objectives of financial integration, financial stability, and financial inclusion,” the ministers' joint statement said.

Natural disaster responses remained key in the April meeting. In its role as chair, Singaporean officials say that they hope to address the widening protection gap. ASEAN countries are increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters, but insurance coverage and pre-disaster risk management remain limited.

“We need to support initiatives that enhance ASEAN's ability to cope with and recover from such shocks,” Heng said, noting the importance of data availability and capacity building for less developed countries in creating disaster resilience.

External relations

The ASEAN grouping currently has free trade agreements (FTA) with Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan, and Korea, which together make up the 16 countries of the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). A ministerial-level meeting was held between the RCEP nations in March, and negotiations are due to resume this month towards crafting an accord across these 16 economies. (See Bridges Weekly, [29 March 2018](#))

Despite continued negotiations for RCEP and other trade initiatives, concerns about trade “protectionism” were raised during the finance ministers' meeting. They said that they remain vigilant of risks that might undermine international trade and investment, given their value in generating growth and fostering development.

“We must continue to have very strong commitments to trade and to openness to the globalisation process,” said the Singaporean finance minister. ASEAN finance ministers and central bank governors will meet again under Thailand's leadership in 2019.

ICTSD reporting; “ASEAN finance ministers, central bankers reaffirm commitment to international trade, investment,” CHANNEL NEWS ASIA, 6 April 2018.

BREXIT

EU, UK Negotiators Begin Prep for Next Chapter in Brexit Talks

The next phase of the Brexit talks is due to get underway in the coming weeks, with EU and UK negotiators looking to wrap up some final details of the transition process, in line with an existing political deal in this area, and begin charting their future relationship for when the transition ends on 31 December 2020.

EU negotiators hope to agree on a withdrawal treaty by October's European Council summit, given the need to ratify the deal domestically for it to take effect upon Brexit in late March 2019. They also aim to have the outlines of a trade deal and other agreements on key areas ready, which both sides would then finalise following Brexit.

Meanwhile, EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier outlined on Tuesday 10 April a series of questions that Brussels considers essential in the forthcoming talks, including on what changes might be in the pipeline for the UK's regulatory framework and what these might mean for environmental protection and other objectives.

Another issue to consider is what Brexit will mean for non-EU countries who have trade agreements with the bloc, which has been the subject of some ministers' level meetings in recent days.

Regulations, long-term plans

Questions about the future of UK's regulatory approach, including on environmental and social issues, have drawn the interest of leaders, activists, and other stakeholders since the beginning of the country's exit process.

UK Environment Secretary Michael Gove has pledged that London will continue to prioritise strong environmental regulations after leaving the EU.

"We have the chance to set the gold standard for environmental science and become a home to centres of environmental excellence. A new independent, statutory body and a strong statement of principles will ensure that outside the EU, we become the world-leading curator of the most precious asset of all: our planet," the environment ministry leader [wrote](#) in 2017.

In January, the UK's environmental agency released a proposed 25-year plan on this policy area. The [document](#), which outlines targets such as eliminating avoidable plastic waste by 2042 and planting 180,000 hectares of woodland by the same date, proposes to shape UK environmental policy over the coming decades.

EU officials have welcomed the move, along with other statements from UK leaders regarding their continued commitment to strong environmental policies. However, they have indicated that they will need to see certain objectives met on this front during the upcoming negotiations.

"What we hear from the UK could be seen as reassuring ... This is reflected in the UK's proposed 25-year plan on the environment. This is welcome but my responsibility as EU's lead negotiator is to remain extremely vigilant," EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier [told the European Parliament](#) on 11 April.

Barnier also told EU parliamentarians that any future EU-UK deal would need to feature "precise provisions on a level playing field, especially in environmental matters," in order to avoid instances where London may move towards more lax policies in a bid to gain a "competitive" edge, and that the UK would need to continue its commitment to high ambition on climate action.

The UK and EU would also need to work out the sustainable management of shared fish stocks and cooperate on other environmental objectives of mutual interest, he said.

Domestic officials have also raised questions about environmental governance in the United Kingdom following Brexit.

In a [statement](#) to the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee, Chair Mary Creagh MP noted concern over the "one in three out" principle, which calls for three pieces of legislation to be annulled for every new one legislative act. Previously, this approach did not apply to environmental regulations since these fell under the EU umbrella; however, with environmental regulations coming under domestic rule with Brexit, she questioned what this change would mean for policymaking going forward.

"As we leave the EU, we are concerned that the 'one in, three out' principle could have a chilling effect on future environmental laws and regulations. It is vital that the UK's environmental protections are in no way weakened outside of the European Union," Creagh said.

Existing trade deals

The United Kingdom will officially exit the EU in March 2019, with a provisional transition period continuing to the end of 2020. What this might mean for existing trade deals with non-EU nations remains uncertain, however, despite expressed hopes by UK officials that these can be carried forward intact through the transition.

Whether current trade deal partners would accept the continuation of current arrangements – or instead ask for some modifications – remains to be seen. According to sources cited by Politico earlier this year, South Korea and Chile have already indicated that they may seek concessions from the UK in implementing their existing trade deal.

Meanwhile, Norway, which participates in the European Economic Area but not in the EU customs union, has recently indicated that it may be open to continued trade with the UK under existing terms. Norwegian finance minister Siv Jensen told the Financial Times this week that Oslo had "no objections to a transition period" with "flexible solutions."

In a [speech](#) in London on 6 April, the Scandinavian finance official emphasised the importance of continued dedication to the Basel Accords, which regulate banking, and close economic ties to the UK throughout the Brexit period.

"The UK has played an important role in developing the European single market for financial services. Norwegian and British views have often been aligned. We will miss the British voice in the EU. Independent of Brexit there will be a need for close cooperation and coordination on financial market issues in Europe also in the future," Jensen said.

ICTSD reporting; "Key dates in Brexit process," REUTERS, 2 February 2018; "Norway offers to roll over UK trade agreements after Brexit," FINANCIAL TIMES, 10 April 2018; "EU will seek 'non-regression' clause to tie UK to environmental standards," THE GUARDIAN, 10 April 2018; "EU approval of Brexit blueprint come with Irish border warning," THE GUARDIAN, 23 March 2018; "Norway gives Britain Brexit backing to continue trade without EU interference," EXPRESS, 10 April 2018; "EU trade partners demand concessions for Brexit transition rollover," POLITICO, 2 February 2018.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Vacancies

The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) is looking to fill the following three vacancies.

ICTSD is hiring for the role of Senior Manager: Climate & Energy, which will be dedicated to conceptualising and implementing a comprehensive programme aimed at informing and supporting trade-related policymaking such that it advances climate action and the scale up of clean energy. The role is a full-time salaried position, with a start date as soon as possible. The deadline for applications is 30 April 2018. For additional details on responsibilities and candidate requirements, please visit the ICTSD [website](#).

ICTSD is also hiring for the role of Programme Officer: Environment and Natural Resources. This position involve work on various trade and environment issues, particularly on an agreement disciplining fisheries subsidies, as well as on topics such as biodiversity. It is a full-time, salaried position for one year, from June 2018 to June 2019, though an extension is possible, dependent on funding. The deadline for applications is 27 April 2018. For additional details on responsibilities and candidate requirements, please visit the ICTSD [website](#).

Additionally, ICTSD is hiring a Junior Associate – Agriculture, Trade, and Sustainable Development. This internship role is meant to support ICTSD's work on agricultural trade and sustainable development, including on issues such as food security, equity, and environmental sustainability. The position is for 15-40 hours per week and is open to students enrolled in university programmes in economics, law, international relations, or related fields, as well as university graduates with such degrees. The deadline for applications is 30 April 2018. For additional details on responsibilities and candidate requirements, please visit the ICTSD [website](#).

Events

Coming Soon

13 April, Tokyo, Japan. ADVISORY COUNCIL POLICY DIALOGUE: FINANCING INFRASTRUCTURE IN DEVELOPING ASIA. This event will focus on the relationship between economic growth and investment in infrastructure go, given the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) estimates which suggest that developing countries in the region will need to invest US\$1.5 trillion per year in infrastructure to meet their growth and developmental goals. This forum will bring together government officials and members of the ADBI to discuss the complex issue of financing regional infrastructure development. For more information about this invitation-only event, visit the ADBI [website](#).

16-22 April, Washington, US. SPRING MEETINGS OF THE BOARDS OF GOVERNORS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) AND THE WORLD BANK GROUP (WBG). The Spring Meetings bring together the IMF's International Monetary and Financial Committee and the joint IMF-World Bank Development Committee, which will review a

series of topics related to their respective missions, the global economy, and international development. For more information about these meetings and to apply to attend, visit the event [website](#).

18 April, Geneva, Switzerland. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND THE WTO. This dialogue is being hosted by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and will provide the platform for informal discussions between Geneva-based negotiators on how to achieve the industrialisation objectives of low-income countries. Topics for discussion include subsidies, local content requirements, and transfer of technology. As part of a series of events under ICTSD's "WTO: Paths Forward" initiative, the meeting will aim to explore options and difficulties in addressing specific trade topics in the run-up to the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference. For more information about this invitation-only event, please visit the event [website](#).

20 April, Geneva, Switzerland. RESHAPING TRADE THROUGH WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT. This meeting is being organised by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and will be held at WTO headquarters. In this conference, the progress towards improving female participation in trade and other related topics will be discussed. To learn more, 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 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.

13 April: Trade Policy Review Body – Montenegro

18 April: Information Session on Proofs of Origin and Certificates of Origin

19 April: Committee on Rules of Origin

Other Upcoming Events

14-15 May, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. HARNESSING ISLAMIC FINANCE FOR A GREEN FUTURE. Islamic finance, which carries its own set of rules and regulations, will be explored in this World Bank conference, with a focus on green investment. Particular attention will be paid to Green Sukuk, or environmentally and Shariah-compatible investment tools. For more information and to register, visit the event [website](#).

22-26 October, Geneva, Switzerland. WORLD INVESTMENT FORUM 2018. Over the course of 50 events including roundtables, summits, and private sector-led sessions, this annual forum, hosted by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will address global challenges for international investment in the era of globalisation and industrialisation. Stakeholders from governments, investment treaty negotiation teams, global companies, and other significant areas will come together to discuss investment-related policymaking, particularly in relation to sustainable development. For more information and to register, visit the event [website](#).

January 2019, location TBC. FIRST CARBON PRICING LEADERSHIP COALITION (CPLC) CONFERENCE. This event will be the first research conference on carbon pricing held by the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition (CPLC). It will bring together researchers, policy makers, and practitioners in this field, aiming for an exchange of ideas and information that can help resolve the gaps that exist between theory and existing practice. More information will be made available closer to the date. To learn more, visit the CPLC [website](#).

Resources

FISHERIES SUBSIDIES RULES AT THE WTO: A COMPILATION OF EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS. By the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD). The papers in this compilation discuss the decision coming out of the WTO's Eleventh Ministerial Conference, which directed trade negotiators to work towards reaching an agreement disciplining harmful fisheries subsidies in time for the next ministerial meet, set for 2019. Through legal and technical analysis, the authors seek to answer some of the questions surrounding small-scale fisheries; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; shared stocks; transparency; and overfishing and overfished stocks. To download this research compilation, visit the ICTSD [website](#).

12TH GLOBAL TRENDS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY INVESTMENT 2018 REPORT. By UN Environment, the Frankfurt School (FS)-UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Collaboration Centre, and Bloomberg New Energy Finance (April 2018). This report shows that global energy investment patterns continue to trend toward renewable energy, particularly solar. For example, last year US\$279.8 billion was invested in renewable energy, with installation of 98 gigawatts of new solar capacity. To download a copy of the report, visit the FS-UNEP [website](#).

DIGITAL COMPANIES AND THEIR FAIR SHARE OF TAXES: MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS. By Matthias Bauer for the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE)(February 2018). Due partly to several EU national governments' call for increased taxes on digital companies, the European Commission is considering placing higher taxes on digital corporations. In this paper, the author argues that such taxes do not take into account the already high taxation rates placed upon corporations operating in the EU, and that taxing digital revenues would threaten digitalisation and tax neutrality. To download the paper, visit the ECIPE [website](#).

OUR SHARED PROSPEROUS FUTURE: AN AGENDA FOR VALUES-LED TRADE, INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE JOBS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH. By the Inquiry Committee for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Trade Out of Poverty (APPG-TOP)(April 2018). The Commonwealth is made up of 53 countries, most of them former British colonies, and includes 445 million residents living in extreme poverty. This report calls for a roadmap for using trade and investment as tools to tackle poverty and ensure inclusive, sustainable development. To download the report, visit the APPG-TOP [website](#).

ECONOMIC POLICY REFORMS 2018: GOING FOR GROWTH INTERIM REPORT. By the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for OECD (2018). Every two years, the OECD publishes a detailed report on structural reforms in income-boosting policy areas in OECD and selected non-OECD countries. This document reviews actions taken by governments over the past year in priority areas, along with providing associated policy recommendations. To download the complete interim report, visit the OECD [iLibrary](#).

EXPLORE THE TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
WORLD FURTHER WITH ICTSD'S BRIDGES NETWORK

BRIDGES AFRICA

Trade and sustainable development news and analysis on Africa
<http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa>
English language

PUENTES

Latin America-focussed analysis and news on trade and sustainable development
<http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/puentes>
Spanish language

МОСТЫ

CIS-focussed analysis and news on trade and sustainable development
<http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/MOSTY>
Russian language

PONTES

Analysis and news on trade and sustainable development for the Portuguese-speaking world
<http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/pontes>
Portuguese language

桥

Analysis and news on trade and sustainable development for the Chinese-speaking world
<http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/桥>
Chinese language

PASSERELLES

Africa-focussed analysis and news on trade and sustainable development
<http://ictsd.org/news/passerelles>
French languages

PUBLISHED BY



International Centre for Trade
and Sustainable Development
Chemin de Ballexert 7-9
1219 Geneva, Switzerland
+41-22-917-8492
www.ictsd.org

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
Netherlands

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Copyright ICTSD, 2018. Readers are encouraged
to quote and reproduce this material for
educational, non-profit purposes, provided the
source is acknowledged.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0
International [License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Your support to BRIDGES and the BRIDGES series
of publications is most welcome; if interested,
please contact Andrew Crosby, Managing
Director at +41-22-917-8335.

Contributors to this issue are Sofia Alicia Baliño,
Nathalie Bolduc, and Maria Ptashkina. The Senior
Editor of Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest is
Sofia Alicia Baliño.

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

ISSN 1563-003X

