



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 11 December 2015

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL - TRADE ISSUES

Tuesday 15 December in Nairobi

The Council will meet at 10.00, local time, in the margins of the 10th **WTO ministerial conference**. It will adopt conclusions serving as a reference for the EU's position during the conference, which is scheduled from 15 to 18 December 2015.

Additional meetings of the Council and the Trade Policy Committee may be convened on the spot, depending on developments. The Council will meet to approve WTO negotiating texts on behalf of the EU and upon conclusion of the conference, to assess the outcome.

The Council is also due to take a decision unrelated to the Nairobi conference, on declassification of the negotiating mandate for a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with **Canada**.

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1 This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

WTO ministerial conference

The Council, during its opening session, is expected to approve a first set of conclusions, setting out the EU's position for the 10th World Trade Organisation ministerial conference.

The conference will be held in Nairobi from 15 to 18 December 2015. Decisions are expected on issues stemming from the WTO's Doha Development Agenda (DDA), though not on the central elements that would enable the DDA to be concluded. There have therefore also been discussions on the form that negotiations will take after Nairobi. The EU's objective remains a strengthening of the multilateral trading system and a clear commitment to the WTO.

The Council is expected to call for concrete, balanced and meaningful outcomes at the conference. It will call on all WTO members to concentrate on those issues that are realistically achievable. Obtaining an agreement in Nairobi is important in order to bolster trust and confidence in the multilateral trading system.

For the EU, such an agreement should involve:

- continuing negotiations on remaining issues of the DDA;
- considering the addition of new items in the WTO negotiating agenda.

Towards the end of the ministerial conference, the Council is expected to agree on a second set of conclusions, giving its assessment of the overall outcome.

Once that overall outcome is known, the Council is expected to adopt a decision establishing the EU's position as concerns export competition, transparency and development issues.

The DDA talks started in 2001 at the WTO's fourth ministerial conference, held in Doha. They are aimed at facilitating global trade, with lower trade barriers and revised trade rules, and improving trading opportunities for developing countries. Following a breakdown of the talks in 2008, several attempts were made to restart them. A stalemate was reached in 2011, leading ministers to admit that the Doha round was in an impasse. It was nevertheless agreed to pursue efforts in areas where progress could be achieved, and talks continued. They led to an agreement on trade facilitation at the 9th ministerial conference, held in Bali in December 2013.

In the run-up to the Nairobi conference, the EU led efforts in preparing a comprehensive outcome on key elements of the DDA. In the end, this could not be achieved. But the EU nevertheless remains committed to a positive outcome on development issues and transparency in the WTO, and will renew its support for the accession to the WTO of least-developed countries (LDCs).

The following issues could be the subject of an outcome in Nairobi:

- Development-related issues, with a focus on LDCs. Progress has been made on three of four issues identified at the 9th WTO ministerial conference, held in Bali in 2013, namely a services exemption, preferential rules of origin and cotton.
- Export competition in agriculture. Strengthened disciplines for all types of export support for farmers, namely export subsidies, export financing in the form of credits, guarantees and insurance programmes, state trading enterprises and international food aid. The EU has presented a joint proposal with Brazil, Argentina, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
- Improved transparency rules on anti-dumping, subsidies, fisheries subsidies and regional trade agreements, as well as domestic regulation in services.

Additionally, two agreements will also be discussed on a "plurilateral" basis, i.e. involving some but not all WTO members. A possible outcome would be:

- the conclusion of negotiations on a revised information technology agreement;
- further progress on the list of products to be covered by an environmental goods agreement.

These agreements could act as building blocks for future multilateral agreements.

On 3 November 2015, WTO director general Roberto Azevêdo outlined a process leading to a ministerial declaration for the conference. This would set out:

- WTO achievements, in the context of the organisation's 20th anniversary;
- deliverable outcomes for the conference, including both ordinary work and decisions of the WTO General Council and a DDA "Nairobi package";
- future work of the WTO, post-Nairobi.

Draft texts for the declaration were presented on 27 November.

As for the EU, the Council also discussed preparations for Nairobi on 27 November. Member states supported the Commission on what might be acceptable as a package and on work post-Nairobi. They strongly welcomed the development of the joint proposal on export competition.

EU-Canada trade negotiations

The Council is expected to decide, without discussion, to declassify the negotiating directives for a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Canada.
