

Steady Progress at the Seventh Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Round

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States and its TPP partners – Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam – concluded the seventh round of negotiations today in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, making further step-by-step progress toward their goal of reaching the outlines of an ambitious, 21st century agreement by the APEC Leaders’ meeting in November.

As at the previous round in Singapore, the TPP countries extended the length of the round in Vietnam to ensure the teams had sufficient time to make meaningful progress in all areas of the negotiation. The additional time was helpful in producing the good progress that was achieved in further developing the detailed legal texts of the agreement, which encompass all areas of their commercial relationships. During the week, the countries reviewed new proposals that the United States and other TPP countries tabled this round; including on intellectual property, transparency, telecommunications, customs, environment; and advanced their efforts to consolidate the various proposals that the countries put forward in previous rounds. They also sought to further clarify their understanding of each other’s positions and continued the rigorous process of finding mutually-acceptable ways to address the specific sensitivities of each country.

Among the issues on which the teams had particularly productive discussions were the new cross-cutting issues that will feature for the first time in the TPP. After consulting internally on the U.S. text tabled at the sixth round, they furthered their efforts to find common ground on the regulatory coherence text intended to make the regulatory systems of their countries operate in a more consistent and seamless manner and avoid the types of regulatory barriers that are increasingly among the key obstacles to trade. The teams also had constructive discussions on approaches to development in the TPP and the importance of ensuring that the agreement serves to close the development gap among TPP members.

While making continued progress on the texts across all the negotiating groups, the nine teams also furthered their work on the accompanying commitments on access to each other’s markets for goods, services, and government procurement. They made further headway in Vietnam in their discussions on services, investment, and government procurement, and on product specific rules of origin. They also discussed their respective requests and offers on industrial goods, agriculture, and textiles, working to close gaps in their positions. The nine teams reviewed in detail each country’s offers and possible approaches to achieving their common goals of producing the most ambitious package possible, supporting the creation and retention of jobs, and promoting regional integration.

In order to accelerate the process, the TPP countries agreed to redouble their efforts in the months ahead. They agreed to intensify their intersessional work, including consulting on existing proposals internally, providing revised offers on the various market access areas, and working to develop proposals to address outstanding issues. In addition, the teams agreed to identify issues on which to focus at the next round in the United States in early September, and to seek to reach agreement on as many of those issues as possible at the next round. To begin this work, several members of the U.S. negotiating team will travel to Hanoi, Vietnam and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia next week. The U.S. team also is working to prepare additional legal text by the next round, and as it does so it will continue consulting closely with Congress and stakeholders.

Prior to the start of the formal negotiating round, Vietnam hosted 140 stakeholders representing business, civil society, and academic groups. Stakeholders from the United States and other TPP countries made presentations on a wide range of issues. On June 23, the Vietnamese delegation hosted a workshop to discuss Vietnam’s labor law and the efforts it has underway to strengthen the labor code and trade union law.