

USTR Announces Intent to Launch WTO Negotiations on Environmental Goods

Washington, D.C. – United States Trade Representative Michael Froman notified the U.S. Congress today of the Obama Administration’s intent to enter into negotiations on a new trade agreement in the World Trade Organization (WTO) aimed at eliminating tariffs on a wide range of environmental goods.

Earlier this year, the United States and thirteen other WTO Members, accounting for 86 percent of global trade in environmental goods, announced their intention to prepare to participate in these negotiations. These Members are Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, the European Union, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland and Chinese Taipei. The negotiations will begin in Geneva, Switzerland, as soon as each Member has finalized its domestic consultation procedures.

Ambassador Froman noted in the notification that these negotiations will build on U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum on environmental goods and maintain momentum in the WTO for the kinds of fresh, credible approaches to trade liberalization that led to success at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2013.

“An agreement on environmental goods can make an important contribution to the domestic and international environmental protection agenda. By eliminating tariffs on the environmental technologies we need to keep our air and water clean, for example, we can make them cheaper and more accessible to everyone,” wrote Ambassador Froman. **“American companies are some of the world’s leading innovators and exporters of environmental technologies, and a WTO environmental goods agreement can support green jobs here at home and level the playing field abroad for U.S. businesses.”**

In 2013, the United States exported \$106 billion of environmental goods, such as wind turbines, solar panels, and wastewater treatment technologies. Global trade in environmental goods is estimated at nearly one trillion dollars annually, and some WTO Members charge tariffs as high as 35 percent on environmental goods.