

Statement on the 18th Round of Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations

07/25/2013

TPP Negotiators Press Ahead in Malaysia, Welcome Japan's Entry

Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia – Officials reported today that they achieved further strong progress at the 18th round of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, which ended today, keeping their eyes fixed on the goal set by President Obama and the other TPP Leaders of concluding a high-standard, comprehensive agreement this year, while welcoming Japan's entry into the negotiations. Through the TPP, the United States is seeking to advance a 21st-century trade and investment framework that will boost competitiveness, expand trade and investment with the robust economies of the Asia Pacific, and support the creation and retention of U.S. jobs, while promoting core U.S. principles on labor rights, environmental protection, and transparency.

Following the guidance of the trade ministers from the United States and the other TPP countries prior to this round – Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam – the negotiating groups covering market access, rules of origin, technical barriers to trade, investment, financial services, e-commerce, and transparency reached agreement on a wide range of technical issues in the legal texts of these chapters, which set the rules that govern the conduct of their trade and investment relations. They also found common ground on issues that allowed them to make progress in the negotiating groups covering intellectual property, competition, and environment. In addition, each group developed a detailed plan for closing remaining issues and completing their work.

The negotiators also moved ahead in their efforts to construct the ambitious packages that will provide access to their respective markets for industrial, agricultural and textile and apparel products, services and investment, and government procurement. They agreed on next steps and an overall plan for achieving these market access outcomes in the timeframe agreed by Leaders.

Throughout the talks, negotiators reflected the wide range of views provided to them by their stakeholders on the best pathway to promote trade and investment, regional integration, and jobs in the United States and the other TPP countries. The TPP negotiations were temporarily adjourned on July 20 so the delegates could listen to and share information with more than 200 stakeholders from the United States and across the TPP region. Stakeholders also met informally with U.S. and other negotiators to provide further detailed information. U.S. chief negotiator Barbara Weisel and her fellow TPP chief negotiators also briefed stakeholders on the status of the negotiations and responded to their questions on specific issues and the process going forward.

On July 23, the United States and the other TPP countries welcomed Japan as the 12th member of the negotiations, following the successful completion of the respective domestic procedures of the United States and the other existing TPP members. Japan received detailed updates on the status of the negotiations and participated actively in the work of the negotiating groups that were meeting on those dates, expressing its commitment to integrate quickly and smoothly into the process. With Japan's entry, TPP countries now account for nearly 40 percent of global GDP and about one-third of all world trade.

Ministers from the TPP countries have been in close touch on TPP over the past month. Over the past week, USTR Froman met in Washington with Vietnamese Trade Minister Hoang, Bruneian Trade Minister Pehin Lim, and Japanese Minister for the Economy, Trade and Industry Motegi, and spoke by phone with Director General Jana of Chile's trade ministry (DIRECON) and Mexican Economy Minister Guajardo. Additionally, Ambassador Froman met with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang during President Sang's visit to Washington, D.C. this week.

Ambassador Froman and the other TPP ministers plan to engage regularly in the coming weeks ahead of the next round to find solutions to the sensitive issues that remain, guide the work of negotiators, and keep the negotiations moving expeditiously toward a high-standard outcome the TPP Leaders agreed to seek.

The 19th round of TPP negotiations will be held in Brunei from August 22-30.