



# Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

## TPP Ministers to Sign Agreement in Auckland

**As anticipated, ministerial representatives from the 12 Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States, and Vietnam) have been invited to Auckland, New Zealand to sign the TPP agreement on Thursday, February 4, 2016.**

The signing ceremony will mark the effective conclusion of negotiations, leaving each nation to complete their domestic legislative procedures before the agreement can enter into effect.

Canada's Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland planned to attend the February 4<sup>th</sup> signing ceremony, even though she recognizes, based on the feedback she has received on the agreement – both in writing and at the numerous gatherings she held since becoming trade minister – that “many Canadians still have not made up their minds and many more still have questions.”

In an open letter published on January 25<sup>th</sup>, Freeland said she intends to “conduct a full and open debate in Parliament” on the impact of the TPP.

“I have written to the Government and Opposition House Leaders as well as the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade to convey my strong belief in the merits of a robust and transparent examination of the TPP,” the trade minister wrote.

However, “for Parliament to fully evaluate the merits of the TPP and for consultations to continue, Canada needs to stay at the table with the

other TPP countries (...) Not attending would mean withdrawing from the TPP altogether, even before Canadians have had an opportunity to fully debate its implications.”

“Just as it is too soon to endorse the TPP, it is also too soon to close the door,” Freeland said.

The February 4<sup>th</sup> signing ceremony does not actually imply the entry into force of the agreement. The latter will only take place once each TPP parliament ratifies the deal, which in Canada means a majority vote in Parliament. However, even if it is deemed “too soon to endorse”, it is almost certain that Canada will not walk away from the deal.

As Freeland wrote, “Canada is a trading nation. As our government has made clear, we want to expand economic opportunities for all Canadians, and trade with our Asia-Pacific partners is key to making that happen.”

If the February 4<sup>th</sup> signing ceremony isn't a concern for Canada, the event is more strategic for the U.S. as its Trade Representative, Michael Froman, hopes the event will spur debates to lure U.S. lawmakers to adopt the TPP as soon as possible.

Various sources, meanwhile, stressed that U.S. Congress is unlikely to consider the deal before the lame duck session (the term used for the time during the end of the U.S. President's term in office and before the next one begins) as the country has launched the presidential race with the Iowa caucus this February. In addition, even though the accord has been broadly endorsed by most business communities, some issues remain and are likely to be addressed by U.S. lawmakers.

## Azevêdo Applauds Members' Optimistic Spirit

World Trade Organization's Director General, Roberto Azevêdo, lauded Members' optimism coming out of the organization's first gathering following the successful outcome at the Nairobi Ministerial Conference (MC10) in December.

"People are optimistic about the WTO, and excited to work more closely with the organization. This was clear throughout my exchanges with governments and businesses in Davos, Switzerland," Azevêdo said last week, urging Members to implement the outcomes agreed to in Bali and Nairobi, as well as continuing to deliver further concrete outcomes.

Azevêdo also highlighted Members' openness to discussing the remaining Doha Development Agenda (DDA) issues as well as tackling them "without prejudice to what the outcomes might be."

"We will need to see openness and flexibility on both substance and process if we are to make further progress," the director general added.

Informed sources say Members, such as the U.S., who are eager to test plurilateral discussions, are planning to complete such negotiations currently on the table this year. These are the trade in services agreement (TiSA), as well as discussions on green goods.

In addition, New Zealand re-circulated a proposal on fisheries subsidies on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The original communication on the issue, which has been endorsed by 29 WTO countries, including Canada, was tabled at MC10 on December 19, 2015. The proposal seeks to achieve ambitious and effective disciplines prohibiting fisheries subsidies with "the goal of eliminating all subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity and enhancing transparency."

Informed sources say the issue is also likely to be negotiated on a plurilateral basis.

**Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, particularly on the WTO negotiations on agriculture.**

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Legal Deposit: National Library of Canada, ISSN 1496-9254

