



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

Ref. 33921
FINAL
18 November 2013

EFTA MINISTERIAL MEETING, GENEVA, 18 NOVEMBER 2013

COMMUNIQUÉ

On 18 November 2013, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) held its biannual Ministerial Meeting in Geneva. The meeting was chaired by Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein. The EFTA Ministers met with the Undersecretary for Industry Development and Trade Policy of the *Philippines*, Mr Adrian S. Cristobal Jr, to discuss options for developing closer trade relations between the two sides.

Ministers discussed the prospects for the global economy, stressing the importance of pursuing long-term growth strategies based on liberal trade and investment policies. In this context, they expressed strong hope that WTO Members would deliver tangible results at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference, taking place in December in Bali, Indonesia. They also exchanged views on the ongoing negotiations between the European Union and the United States on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Ministers reviewed the state of affairs in EFTA's free trade relations. They welcomed the positive developments in the free trade negotiations with *India* and looked forward to their timely conclusion. Ministers noted the progress made in the negotiations with the Customs Union of *Russia, Belarus* and *Kazakhstan* and exchanged views on how to advance this process to its closing stages. They reviewed developments in the negotiations with *Indonesia* and *Vietnam*, reiterating their commitment to these processes. They noted the positive engagement with *Guatemala* and discussed the prospects for that country joining the EFTA-Central America Free Trade Agreement. Ministers look forward to starting negotiations on a free trade agreement with *Malaysia* early next year. Welcoming *Thailand's* readiness to resume free trade negotiations, they looked forward to the organisation of a first round in early 2014.

Ministers reaffirmed EFTA's interest in developing closer trade relations with potential partners in *Sub-Saharan Africa* and with the *Philippines*. They agreed to continue evaluating the potential for developing preferential trade relations with the *MERCOSUR* States and with *Pakistan* and for resuming free trade negotiations with *Algeria*. They also exchanged views on the prospects for extending EFTA's free trade network in the broader European neighbourhood and for updating and further developing existing free trade agreements, notably the agreements with *Canada* and *Turkey*.

EFTA's network of preferential trade relations outside the European Union currently comprises 25 free trade agreements with 35 countries and territories. This network is complemented by 6 joint declarations on cooperation.

Ministers met with the *EFTA Parliamentary Committee* to discuss recent developments and priorities in EFTA's trade relations with the world.

Attending:

Liechtenstein: Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs (Chair)

Iceland: Mr Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade

Norway: Ms Monica Mæland, Minister of Trade and Industry

Switzerland: Mr Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research

EFTA: Mr Kristinn F. Arnason, Secretary-General
