



# EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

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## **EFTA MINISTERIAL MEETING, GENEVA, 24 NOVEMBER 2017**

### COMMUNIQUÉ

On 24 November 2017, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) held its biannual Ministerial Meeting in Geneva. The meeting was chaired by Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture and Education of Liechtenstein.

The EFTA Countries and Moldova signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between EFTA and the Republic of Moldova as a first step to closer economic relations.

The Ministers of Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland met with H.E. Nihat Zeybekci, the Turkish Minister of Economy and announced in a joint statement the conclusion in principle of the negotiations on the modernisation and expansion of the EFTA-Turkey Free Trade Agreement. The Agreement with Turkey is EFTA's oldest free trade agreement and today's joint statement is an affirmation of the continued importance of the economic ties between the two sides.

The EFTA Ministers confirmed their commitment to advancing negotiations with *India, Indonesia, Mercosur, Malaysia* and *Vietnam*. The Ministers also welcomed the progress made in the negotiations with *Ecuador* and expressed their confidence that the negotiations could be concluded later this year. Regarding existing free trade agreements, they reaffirmed their willingness to starting negotiations on expanding and modernising the Free Trade Agreements with *Chile* and the *Southern African Customs Union (SACU)*, in addition to continuing negotiations with *Mexico*. They also underlined their readiness to continue talks with *Canada* regarding possible negotiations to revise and expand the EFTA-Canada Free Trade Agreement.

The EFTA Ministers discussed the ongoing negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union and emphasised the importance of maintaining close economic and trade relations with the United Kingdom after it leaves the European Union. The EFTA States will continue to consult each other in order to help achieve this goal.

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

EFTA's network of preferential trade relations outside the European Union currently comprises 27 free trade agreements with 38 countries and territories. Over 12 percent of EFTA's total exports go to these trade partners and they are the source of 7.5 percent of EFTA imports. This network is now complemented by seven Joint Declarations on Cooperation.

Ministers appointed Ambassador Henri Gétaz of Switzerland to succeed Secretary-General Kristinn F. Árnason on 1 September 2018.

**Attending:**

Iceland: Mr Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs

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

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. Árnason, Secretary-General

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