

**PRIORITIES
DURING THE SWISS EFTA COUNCIL CHAIR**

First half 2012

The Swiss Chair will notably base its priorities for the first half of 2012 on the conclusions made at the EFTA Council meeting at Ministerial level in Geneva on 14 November 2011.

1. Internal EFTA affairs

- Adapt the Vaduz Convention (EFTA Convention) and its annexes in line with changing needs
- Conclude the work relating to the further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products between EFTA Member States by adopting the relevant amendments to the EFTA Convention
- Further develop Member States' common basis for future free trade negotiations

2. Third-country relations

Existing Free Trade Agreements:

- **Korea, Canada, Egypt, Turkey:** Hold Joint Committee meetings
- **Colombia, Gulf Cooperation Council, Hong Kong, Montenegro, Peru, Ukraine:** Work towards the entry into force of the respective Free Trade Agreements for all Member States
- Continue to actively manage and **further develop existing free trade agreements** following international developments and relations with other major trading partners

Ongoing free trade negotiations:

- **Bosnia-Herzegovina:** Sign the Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible
- **India:** Finalise the negotiations in the first half of 2012
- **Russia/Belarus/Kazakhstan:** Move forward substantively in the negotiating process
- **Indonesia:** Move forward substantively in the negotiating process
- **Central American States:** Start substantive negotiations on a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
- **Algeria, Thailand:** Continue to monitor developments with a view to resuming free trade negotiations when conditions allow

New free trade negotiations and future potential partners:

- **Vietnam:** Open free trade negotiations on a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible
- **Malaysia:** Continue the exploratory work, including a scoping exercise, with a view to take a joint decision on the opening of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement
- **Philippines:** Examine the feasibility of a Free Trade Agreement
- **MERCOSUR:** Pursue the contacts in the framework of the Joint Committee established under the Joint Declaration of Cooperation with a view to explore ways to further develop trade relations
- Further explore closer trade relations and possibilities with other potential partners, in particular with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa

3. Other activities

- Continue exchanging views on ongoing bilateral free trade negotiations by individual EFTA Member States
- Follow closely developments with regard to EFTA Member States' bilateral relations with the European Union, including the application by Iceland to join the EU
- Exchange views on developments with respect to international economic and trade negotiations, in particular the prospects in the context of the WTO
- Continue consultations within EFTA in relation to the WTO Transparency Mechanism for RTA's (EFTA CRTA group)