



# EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

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## **PRIORITIES DURING THE NORWEGIAN EFTA COUNCIL CHAIR First half 2009**

The Norwegian Chair bases its priorities for the first half of 2009 on the conclusions made at the EFTA Council meeting at ministerial level in Geneva 25 November 2008.

In order to increase the awareness of and engagement in EFTA from all interested parties we aim to further improve transparency and openness in all EFTA matters.

The main priority for the chairmanship period is to continue strengthening the EFTA free trade network, with a view to increasing trade and economic cooperation with third countries. The progress of developing EFTA's third country relations will take account of limited available resources.

The chairmanship will promote EFTA initiatives for the protection of the environment and labour and social rights.

### **1. Internal EFTA affairs**

- Implement the review of the Council's decision on public access to documents
- Finalise the modalities for the regional forum
- Follow up the working group on EFTA's 50 years anniversary
- Follow up the working group on Trade and Environment and the Working group on Social and Labour standards
- Follow up the working group on the Development of EFTA, including the Faroe request for examination of possible membership
- Intensify internal EFTA review of model texts for future EFTA free trade agreements

### **2. Third country relations**

#### *Existing free trade agreements:*

- SACU, Croatia, Turkey and Lebanon: Hold Joint Committee meetings and monitor further developments of the agreements

Concluded free trade negotiations:

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Finalize the legal review and aim at signing the concluded Free Trade Agreement in the first half of 2009

Ongoing Free Trade Negotiations:

- India: Hold two rounds of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement
- Peru: Resolve outstanding issues with the aim of signing the agreement in 2009
- Algeria: Aiming at successfully concluding the free trade negotiations
- Thailand: examine the possibility of resuming the negotiations

Prospective free trade negotiations and future potential partners:

- Russia: Prepare for negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement
- Ukraine: Launch negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement
- Albania and Serbia: One round of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with each country
- Malaysia: Sign a Joint Declaration on Cooperation in view of possible future free trade negotiations
- Indonesia: Continue contacts with a view to preparing for free trade negotiations
- Hong Kong: Hold an exploratory meeting

**3. Other activities**

- Continue exchanging views among the EFTA states on ongoing bilateral free trade negotiations
- Continuing exchanging views on the ongoing negotiations in the WTO
- Follow-up of the transparency mechanism in the WTO's Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) for EFTA's free trade agreements, including prepare for the examinations of the EFTA-Korea and the EFTA-SACU free trade agreements