



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

EFTA MINISTERIAL MEETING, GENEVA 3 DECEMBER 2007

COMMUNIQUÉ

EFTA Ministers welcomed the Joint Study between India and EFTA which could lead to future negotiations on a free trade agreement. Furthermore, the Ministers expressed satisfaction with the good progress in the free trade negotiations with the countries of the Gulf cooperation Council (GCC), Colombia and Peru and looked forward to a successful conclusion of those negotiations. Ministers also welcomed the entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with Egypt on 1 August 2007 and the forthcoming entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

On 3 December 2007, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) held a Ministerial meeting in Geneva under the Chairmanship of Mr Dag Terje Andersen, Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry.

The Ministers renewed their strong commitment to the multilateral trading system and to the successful conclusion of the WTO Doha round and regretted that not more progress had been made in the Doha negotiations so far. At the same time, they confirmed that free trade agreements provide a good basis to improve access to important foreign markets and to attain a more advanced level of economic cooperation between EFTA and its partners.

The EFTA Ministers endorsed a Joint Study between India and EFTA that concluded that both parties would benefit from a broad based Trade and Investment Agreement.

Ministers looked forward to signing the Free Trade Agreement with Canada early in 2008. Furthermore, they welcomed the progress made in the negotiations with Colombia and Peru. They also noted that the negotiations with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council¹ (GCC) were progressing well. They expressed the wish to finalise these negotiations in 2008. Ministers looked forward to resuming free trade negotiations with Thailand in 2008 after that a democratic election had taken place.

Ministers noted the launch of the EFTA-Algeria negotiations in November with satisfaction and confirmed the aim to finalise these negotiations as soon as possible.

The Ministers noted that good progress had been made in preparing for future free trade negotiations with Albania and Serbia. Furthermore, Ministers agreed to consider the possibility of strengthening trade relations with Montenegro. Ministers also recalled their

¹ Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

interest in preparing the ground for opening free trade negotiations with Russia and the Ukraine, once their respective accession negotiations to the WTO are finalised.

Regarding Indonesia, Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the work done in the context of the Joint Working Group on trade and investment, and they recalled EFTA's readiness to open negotiations on a comprehensive trade agreement as soon as possible. Ministers furthermore reconfirmed their interest in deepening trade and investment relations between EFTA and Malaysia.

Ministers exchanged views with regard to building free trade relations with China and Japan. They underlined the high importance of these countries for the individual EFTA members and EFTA.

Ministers welcomed the entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with Egypt on 1 August this year and the forthcoming entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).²

The EFTA Ministers also met with the EFTA Parliamentary Committee and discussed free trade relations and developments under the EEA Agreement.

Ministers attending

Norway: Mr Dag Terje ANDERSEN, Minister of Trade and Industry (Chair)

Iceland: Ms Ingibjörg Sólrún GÍSLADÓTTIR, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Liechtenstein: Ms Rita KIEBER-BECK, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Switzerland: Ms Doris LEUTHARD, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs

² Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland