

**PRIORITIES
DURING THE SWISS EFTA COUNCIL CHAIR**

First half 2016

1. Relations amongst EFTA countries

- Continue to update the Vaduz Convention (EFTA Convention) and its annexes in light of evolving needs of the EFTA States and in order to reflect common developments under the EEA Agreement and the Swiss bilateral agreements with the European Union.
- Further develop Member States' common basis for future free trade negotiations.

2. Third-country relations

Ongoing FTA negotiations

- *Georgia, the Philippines*: continue negotiations with a view to reaching a conclusion in the first half of 2016.
- *India*: resume negotiations with a view to concluding the process expeditiously.
- *Indonesia*: resume negotiations at the earliest opportunity.
- *Malaysia*: hold two negotiating rounds in the first half 2016 and make substantive progress.
- *Vietnam*: intensify contacts with Vietnam, in particular on political level with a view to concluding the agreement with a satisfying result.

Management and development of existing FTAs

- *Turkey*: continue negotiations on a substantive expansion of the agreement with a view to reaching a conclusion in the course of 2016.
- *Mexico*: start negotiations on updating and developing the agreement.
- *Canada*: begin formal exploratory processes in view of a possible start of negotiations on a substantive expansion of the free trade agreements.
- *Chile*: continue exploratory discussions on the possibility of engaging in an update of the FTA.
- Continue work on the maintenance and possible further development of other existing free trade agreements.

Negotiations on hold

- *Algeria, Thailand, and Russia/Belarus/Kazakhstan*: monitor developments.

Potential partners and other activities

- *Mercosur*: pursue exploratory talks with the aim of assessing the scope for possible free trade negotiations.
- *Ecuador*: begin preparatory work in order to start negotiations on a free trade agreement in the second half of this year.
- *East African Community*: sign a Joint Declaration on Cooperation in order to explore the prospects for developing closer trade relations.
- *Australia*: examine the possibilities to develop closer trade relations.

3. Other activities

- Continue and deepen the trade policy dialogue with the US regarding the ongoing Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations and add further substance to the trade policy dialogue with the US through expert-level discussions on specific topics.
 - Continue the interactions with the EU regarding the ongoing Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations.
 - Follow developments with respect to international trade negotiations, in particular within the World Trade Organization (WTO), the plurilateral initiatives (TISA and EGA) as well as other negotiations such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations.
 - Follow the developments concerning the ratification process of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).
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