

## **Round 14 of TPP Negotiations Kicks Off in Leesburg Amid Low Expectations**

The nine countries (Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the U.S., and Vietnam) involved in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations recommenced their discussions on September 6 in Leesburg (Virginia, U.S.) amid low expectations that concrete progress will be recorded on the most contentious issues under negotiation during the 10 day meeting.

TPP trade ministers themselves acknowledged the need for their respective negotiators to step up their efforts to advance the discussion with the aim to close additional chapters this year. Meeting on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Vladivostok (Russia) this past week, TPP trade ministers reviewed the progress made over the last 13 rounds of negotiations. There, they agreed to update their respective leaders by producing “a Ministers’ Report to Leaders” – released on September 9 – in which they instructed their negotiating teams “to direct their energies at promptly finding pragmatic, creative, flexible, and mutually-acceptable solutions to the remaining issues under negotiation.”

Indeed, progress across the 29 chapters under discussion has been somewhat unequal. If negotiations have progressed in areas such customs, cross-border services, government procurement and telecommunications, it has not been the case for the toughest issues – intellectual property rights (IPR), state-owned enterprises or market access for goods. In their report to leaders, trade ministers acknowledged that progress in these areas is advancing at varying paces and that further work was needed especially across the market access chapter.

“We now are focused on developing creative solutions so areas of sensitivity will not compromise the ambition set for this agreement,” the report reads.

Closing additional chapters in Leesburg – mostly issues dubbed less contentious – e.g. competition policy, competitiveness and business facilitation, cooperation and capacity building – would be a significant achievement on which Members can build momentum.

So far, out of 29 chapters, only one – small and medium-sized enterprises – has been completed. And, given the expected addition of Mexico and Canada at the negotiating table next month, talks are unlikely to move faster.

Environment, rules of origin, labor, cross-border trade in services, telecommunications, trade remedies, investment and technical barriers to trade are among the chapters tackled so far in Leesburg. The groups also discussed some issues pertaining to IPR and held bilateral meetings on market access.

There was no specific date for concluding the negotiation mentioned in the Trade Ministers’ Report to Leaders, as Ministers only committed to bring the talks to a successful end “as soon as possible.”

## Upcoming Events

- TPP Round XIV, September 6–15, 2012, Leesburg, Virginia (U.S.), December 2012 (TBC)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, September 20-21, November 14-15, 2012
- WTO Public Forum, September 24–26, 2012
- Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group, October 8–12, 2012

Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, particularly on the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

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