



Presentation of the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the area of
common commercial policy before the
Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament
Brussels, 22 January 2018

Mr President,

Honourable Members of INTA,

Dear colleagues,

I would first like to wish everybody a successful New Year.

It is my pleasure and honour to present to you the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency in the field of common commercial policy.

The Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union was launched on 1 January 2018. It should be borne in mind that Bulgaria is part of a Presidency trio together with Estonia, which carried out the role in the second half of 2017, and Austria, which will take its turn in the second half of 2018. I would like to assure you that Bulgaria's priorities for the common commercial policy are a logical and political continuation of the priorities laid down in the Estonian Presidency's programme, and aim to add to and build on the work that has already been done.

It should be emphasised that the Presidency of the Council works in close cooperation with the European Commission and the European Parliament, along the lines set out in the fundamental policy documents of the European Union. The Bulgarian Presidency will make every effort to continue the close cooperation between these three institutions.

The trade policy priorities are closely linked to and derive from the general priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency. A key element in these which I would like to highlight are the three 'Cs' – the instruments for achieving our common goals, specifically:

- Consensus
- Competitiveness
- Cohesion

Trade policy is mainly geared towards enhancing the European economy's **competitiveness**, since it contributes to economic growth and job creation. This is also the main reason for its prioritisation within our Presidency.

Allow me to present the specific trade priorities for Bulgaria.

Traditionally, we are **primarily** committed to **enhancing the World Trade Organisation's credibility and strengthening the multilateral trading system.**

The minimalist results of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference call for serious reflection and in-depth discussion in the Council about the prospects for the multilateral trading system and the possible follow-up measures.

It is important to find a way out of the current stalemate in the WTO. To this end, we need to continue the dialogue on how to strengthen the WTO, including its negotiating, monitoring and deliberative functions, and ensure the effective operation of the dispute settlement mechanism.

As a **second priority**, we will focus on preserving the EU's leadership role in **multilateral and plurilateral arrangements in the areas of investment and trade in goods and services**. We will work to ensure the continuation of multilateral and plurilateral negotiations in the area of trade in goods and services and, *as and when appropriate*, to launch negotiations in areas such as e-commerce, data flows and digital services. Another aspect of this priority is the reform of the international investment dispute settlement system and, in particular, the adoption of negotiating directives and the launch of negotiations on the Multilateral Investment Court, as and when appropriate.

As a **third priority**, we will focus on **free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations with priority third countries and regions**. By the end of 2017 significant progress had been made in this area. We will place the emphasis on:

- the legal scrubbing following the finalisation of negotiations with **Japan**, and continuing the negotiations on the Investment Chapter, with the EU maintaining its approach to investment protection;
- reaching a political agreement with **Mercosur**, while maintaining the goal of achieving an ambitious, balanced and mutually beneficial deal;
- achieving progress in the bilateral negotiations with **ASEAN countries**, and the discussion and possible adoption by the Council of decisions on the signing and conclusion of FTAs with Singapore and Vietnam;
- adopting negotiating directives and launching negotiations on free trade agreements with **Australia** and **New Zealand**;
- intensifying negotiations on the modernisation of the trade part of the Association Agreement with **Chile**, following the adoption of negotiating directives by the Council in November of last year;
- pursuing the political conclusion of the negotiations on the modernisation of the trade agreement with Mexico – building on the progress made in December – and launching procedures in the Council for the approval of the results of the negotiations;
- making progress on the EU's ongoing negotiations with other third countries, such as the North African and Middle Eastern countries, implementing the Deep and Comprehensive



Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) in the Association Agreements with Ukraine and Moldova, and on developing the Eastern partnership.

Our fourth **priority** lies with foreign direct investments and the international public procurement instrument. Regarding the **screening of foreign direct investments in the EU**, special consideration will be given to the technical discussions on the new draft Regulation establishing a framework for screening foreign direct investments in the EU. Our objective will be to achieve significant progress and possibly conclude the procedures for formulating a Council negotiating position.

Another issue we will be working on is the **international public procurement** instrument. Depending on the possibilities, we will resume the discussions on the dossier at a technical level, with a view to making progress on the drafting of a balanced position.

In connection with the work on these legislative dossiers, I would like to emphasise our sincere appreciation of the constructive and realistic position, as well as the flexibility, shown by the INTA negotiating team during the trilogue on the modernisation of trade defence instruments, which was brought to a successful conclusion during the Estonian Presidency.

Last but not least, I would like to mention the **control of the export of dual-use items**. In light of the review of the EU dual-use export control policy, launched in 2017, the Presidency will work to reach an agreement on the proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union control regime on the export, transfer, brokerage, technical assistance and transit of dual-use goods.

I can assure you that the Presidency will also work actively on all other topics that are included in the EU's current trade agenda. Part of this process will be the informal meeting of the Trade Ministers in Sofia and the regular meeting of the Foreign Affairs/Trade Council in Brussels.

In conclusion, I would like to point out once again that for us the European Parliament is an important and close partner of the Council in the area of trade. The two institutions jointly implement the EU's legislative power. In this respect, we rely on beneficial cooperation to find suitable solutions and achieve common objectives.

Thank you for your attention and I am ready to take your questions.