REPORT
Meeting Maria Åsenius at the International Relations Committee of BusinessEurope
29 January 2016, 14:00-15:30 at BusinessEurope

Summary

Chairman Niklas Bergström introduced the meeting presenting the main topics of discussion.

Maria Åsenius provided an update on trade topics as requested by BusinessEurope: TTIP; China; India; Ukraine/Russia; WTO after the Nairobi Ministerial.

Subsequently, participants raised questions on the Safe-Harbour Court ruling, TTIP: sustainability chapter – regulatory cooperation on services - Energy and raw materials – Buy American Act - RoO; EU-Japan negotiations; MES China; WTO and the remaining issues from the Doha round; TiSA; Environmental Goods Agreement; customs problems in Ukraine; CETA and Mercosur.

Maria Åsenius' 30 minutes intervention was followed by an hour of questions.

The Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) congratulated the Commission on the outcome of the Nairobi Ministerial Conference, urged the Commission not to succumb to the temptation to head for a "TTIP light" and enquired about the status of the Safe-Harbour Court ruling. Maria Åsenius underlined that "TTIP light" would indeed be a big mistake. A Safe-Harbour agreement might be reached by early February 2016. The chairman asked about TTIP's sustainability chapter. Maria Åsenius answered that it had not yet been tabled with the US. BDI wanted to know how to pursue the Doha agenda and NAMA in particular and asked about the Commission's strategy on Conflict Minerals. Maria Åsenius answered that the Commission had an open mind about WTO/NAMA. As to Conflict Minerals the Commission acted as mediator in the trilogue.

European Services Forum (ESF) wondered about regulatory cooperation on services in TTIP, the progress of TiSA and EU-Japan negotiations. Maria Åsenius clarified that TTIP was a living agreement. TiSA was currently negotiated by certain WTO members. For EU-Japan negotiations, 2016 was a crucial year and the ball would be in Japan's court now. Eurocoton made a remark on US's flexibility regarding Buy American in order to strengthen EU's competitiveness. Maria Åsenius agreed on this point. CEFIC evoked a possible avenue as regards TTIP's chapter in energy and raw materials, which could be investments in bioethanol, where EU is facing 60& import duties. Maria Åsenius thanked CEFIC for the information.

CONFINDUSTRIA raised the MES China issue: many jobs in the EU were at risk and asked about the timing for a consultation and TDI modernisation. Maria Åsenius said that the Commission would go through in a thorough impact assessment. A stakeholder event is scheduled for mid-March 2016. The European Parliament and Member States will have their say in the codecision procedure. CATERPILLAR asked about the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA). Maria Åsenius explained that the momentum was lost. ACEA underlined the importance to head for a substantial TTIP agreement. OMV enquired about the EU’s approach regarding improved relations with Russia. Maria Åsenius said that the EU would start addressing trade irritants with Russia. DAIMLER EU wondered about EU's trade relations with Iran. Maria Åsenius remarked that most importantly Iran should join WTO first.
TUSIAD enquired about the RoO applicable to EU exports to the US which would incorporate Turkish imports. Would a cumulation be allowed? Maria Åsenius answered to follow this question up with Commission services.

EURATEX pointed to customs problems its companies were encountering in the Ukraine. Maria Åsenius took note of the issue. BASF wondered about CETA and whether it would be a mixed agreement. Maria Åsenius answered that it would be for the Court to decide. Luisa SANTOS enquired about the status of the EU-Mercosur negotiations. Maria Åsenius answered that internal consultations were on-going.

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