Mr Karel De Gucht  
EU Trade Commissioner  
Member of the European Commission  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium  

Dear Trade Commissioner De Gucht,

The 2013 EU-Japan Summit offers the first opportunity since the launch of negotiations towards an EU-Japan free trade agreement to assess what has been achieved so far and to spur on this most vital work. While the European Business Council in Japan (the EBC) is delighted that the negotiations are underway and energetically supports the process, we are concerned that progress in some areas appears to be slow and momentum lost. Yet the need for an ambitious, comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreement is urgent. It promises to significantly boost bilateral trade and investment and so set both the EU and Japan on a new course of enhanced cooperation and prosperity. We therefore urge the Summit leaders to ensure that the negotiations are on track for a swift and successful conclusion.

The potential benefits to both the EU and Japanese economies of a balanced EU-Japan FTA are clear. Japan is the EU’s seventh largest trading partner and accounts for 3.3 per cent (55.5 billion euros) of all EU exports in 2012. In the same year, the EU ranked as Japan’s third largest trading partner, accounting for 3.6 per cent (63.8 billion euros) of all EU imports. While already significant, studies conducted for the European Commission have suggested that this trade relationship has considerable upwards potential: for example, removal of current tariff and non-tariff barriers could lead to a significant increase in trade for both partners. The benefits would stretch beyond the many European companies already operating in Japan to all those, current and future, seeking to expand into this valuable market. Moreover, a mutually beneficial agreement could boost the EU economy, lifting GDP and employment.

It is vital that such prospects for lasting growth and jobs are not compromised. The long-standing tariff and non-tariff barriers that frustrate the success of foreign companies in the Japanese market must be rolled back. The EU Summit leaders should remind Japan that in the Scoping Exercise, it committed to Roadmaps for the elimination of non-tariff barriers in the EU illustrative list and must now show it is making progress in meeting those requirements if the European Commission is to gain the support of the Member States to continue the negotiations beyond the first year review. We therefore urge the EU Summit leaders to reiterate the importance of this review and press Japan for the necessary progress.
The road ahead is clearly challenging for both parties, not only in view of the size and complexity of the task, but also in terms of the responsibility to achieve successful negotiations and a strong, mutually beneficial agreement. The prize ahead—a sustained increase in bilateral trade, investment and employment—makes it all worthwhile. The EBC stands by to offer all possible support.

We have also sent this letter to the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to share our concerns and urge you to work with all Summit leaders to ensure that the Tokyo Summit reaffirms the commitment to a mutually beneficial EU-Japan free trade agreement and gives the negotiations a much-needed boost. We have also written to the Prime Minister of Japan, the Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Japan, stressing the importance of a strong commitment from policy makers and regulators to deal with non-tariff barriers and keep the negotiations on track.

We should be pleased to discuss the content of this letter with you or your advisers. In the meantime, we will remain in close contact with our colleagues in European and Japanese industry and in the Delegation of the European Union to Japan to provide any assistance that may be required.

Yours sincerely,

Duco Delbrück
Chairman
European Business Council in Japan (EBC)
(The European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan)

CC:
H.E. Ambassador Hans-Dietmar Schweisgut
Delegation of the EU to Japan
Mr. Marc Vanheukelen  
Head of De Gucht Cabinet  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium  

31 October, 2013

Dear Mr. Vanheukelen,

I am pleased to attach a copy of the letter and attachment sent today to the EU Trade Commissioner, Mr. De Gucht, on behalf of the European Business Council in Japan, ahead of the EU-Japan Summit on 19 November, 2013.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Murray  
Executive Director  
The European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan