



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Trade

Directorate E - Neighbouring countries, USA and Canada
USA and Canada

Brussels, **12 MARS 2013**
DG TRADE E.1/DL

Ms. Goyens,

Mr. Mierzwinski,

On 13 February, Presidents Barroso, Van Rompuy and Obama endorsed the EU-US "High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth's" report recommendations and asked that each side initiate the internal procedures necessary to launch negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). I wanted to take the opportunity of this announcement to follow-up on our meeting last November, where we had the opportunity to discuss progress on the transatlantic regulatory cooperation in the framework of TEC but also to exchange views on the prospects of an EU-US bilateral negotiation.

Firstly, let me thank you again for sharing with us last December the TACD's position paper on the future of EU and US trade and economic relations. Let me reassure you that consumer interests are integral part of our consideration when preparing for the future negotiations and that, as you suggest, we intend to closely work with consumer representatives throughout the negotiation process.

I welcome your support for our intention to address existing "behind-the-border" regulatory obstacles and I share the view that the removal of these barriers should not be made at the expenses of consumer protection.

We have taken note of the main areas of interest for your organisation for the upcoming transatlantic negotiations and of the list of priorities you would like negotiators to focus on. The extent to which these will be covered by the TTIP negotiations or, alternatively, by the on-going cooperation in the framework of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) still needs to be defined. Notwithstanding that, I can already confirm to you that, as outlined also in the HLWG final report, areas such as competition policy, customs, or the reduction of regulatory barriers in a number of sectors will be part of the negotiations. We have taken note that on the latter, you expect negotiators to make concrete progress in areas such as medical devices, information society and emerging technologies. More in particular, I take note of your specific contributions related to the agri-food sector in areas such as animal identification and food tracing, rapid alert notification systems and as regards antibiotic resistance. These have been passed to the relevant experts within the Commission and will be considered when preparing for the related discussions.

We also appreciate your comments regarding the future role of TEC and of the High Level Regulatory cooperation Forum (HLRCF) in a context of bilateral comprehensive negotiations. You should know that this is certainly a matter that should be part of the discussions our political leaders will be having in the next months. I can nevertheless reassure you that there is a strong willingness from both sides to see TEC continue working and delivering results.

I would also like to inform you that on 10-11 April 2013, the European Commission and the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will hold a public meeting of the HLRCF in Washington, D.C. The intention is to provide interested persons and organisations an opportunity to help the EU and US define priorities for the regulatory component of future bilateral negotiations and for future work in the HLRCF. The deadline for declaring an interest to participate in this meeting is 20 March. I understand that TACD has received a formal notice of the organisation of the meeting but in any case, you can find all the information in our webpage: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=874> . We look forward to TACD's active participation in such important meeting.

Finally, I would also like to signal that we are currently discussing with our US counterparts possible dates for the next meeting of TEC Principals. We are hopeful the meeting could take place before the summer break, possibly in late spring. Once we have agreed on a date and venue, we will inform you and, if possible, we will seek to arrange the regular meeting between TACD and Commissioner De Gucht. In the meantime, we will appreciate receiving your views and suggestions as regards the agenda of the upcoming TEC meeting. We will do our utmost to ensure topics close to consumer interests are high in the TEC agenda.

I remain at your disposal for any further discussions on TEC and overall EU-US trade relations. In the meantime, I understand that a meeting between our Director Ignacio Garcia Bercero and Anna Fielder, TACD's senior adviser, is scheduled for 14th March 2013. This will be an excellent opportunity to discuss in detail TACD's views on the upcoming EU-US trade and investment negotiations.

Yours sincerely,



Damien LEVIE