

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) ROUND 18
MEDIA STATEMENT
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The 18th Round of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations which started on 15 July, ended today. This Round witnessed the participation of more than 650 officials from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Vietnam.

On 23 July, we welcomed Japan as the 12th member of the TPP negotiations. Over the last two days, members briefed Japan on the state of play in the negotiations. Japan participated actively in the negotiations, demonstrating its readiness to integrate quickly into the negotiating process. Japan's participation in the TPP creates a market of 790 million people with a combined GDP of US\$ 27 trillion, accounting for one third of global trade.

Thirteen negotiating groups met in this Round to discuss investment, non-conforming measures, competition, market access, rules of origin, technical barriers to trade, financial services, e-commerce, temporary entry, IPR, environment, government procurement and legal and institutional issues.

We continued to make good progress in resolving more technical issues in most of the groups, including by taking up issues that were advanced inter-sessionally. We were also able to narrow differences in the more difficult issues, paving the way for possible early closure on some of these issues. On the more challenging subjects of intellectual property, environment and state-owned enterprise, negotiators are exploring further options to advance work in the negotiating groups.

With regard to market access for industrial, agriculture, textiles and apparel products, negotiators agreed on a work programme to accelerate negotiations to achieve the goal of comprehensive liberalisation.

Although significant progress was made during the 18th Round, there are still a number of issues that require further work. We are now entering a stage where negotiators have to deal with the more difficult and sensitive issues. With a clear plan for inter-sessional work on all outstanding issues, we are hopeful that more issues can be closed in the next round.

Despite the hectic negotiating schedule, negotiators were able to engage with stakeholders. A Forum for stakeholders was held on 20 July 2013. More than 200 stakeholders participated with 44 of them presenting papers on a wide range of issues of interest and concern to industry, non-governmental organisations, academia and specific interest groups. Chief negotiators also briefed stakeholders on the status of the negotiations and responded to specific questions raised.

The 19th Round of the TPP negotiations is scheduled to be held from 22 – 30 August 2013 in Brunei.