

Ministerial Guidance Energizes Negotiators Work During 19th Round of TPP Negotiations

Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei – Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiators intensified their work this week to close gaps between them as directed by their Ministers, who met last week in Brunei Darussalam to discuss possible landing zones on remaining sensitive and challenging issues and sequencing of issues in the final talks. A Ministerial meeting of the TPP countries – Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Vietnam – gave guidance to negotiators on achieving an ambitious and balanced 21st-century agreement that will enhance trade and investment between them, promote innovation and competitiveness, economic growth and development, and support the creation and retention of jobs in their countries.

Buoyed by the ministerial engagement and their commitment to actively guide the negotiations, negotiators advanced their technical work this round on the texts covering market access, rules of origin, investment, financial services, intellectual property, competition, and environment. They also made progress on the packages providing access to each other's markets for goods, services, investment, financial services, temporary entry, and government procurement. Their discussions both jointly and bilaterally were successful in identifying creative and pragmatic solutions to many issues and further narrowing the remaining work. Also this week, negotiators covering labour issues continued their work on the outstanding issues in the chapter.

Having identified pathways forward, negotiators will meet again intersessionally in the coming weeks to further their work. Several other negotiating groups that did not meet during this round because they required additional time for domestic consultation before convening also will meet, including those covering technical barriers to trade, e-commerce, and legal issues. The intersessional work is intended to further advance the negotiations in the lead up to APEC Leaders meeting in Bali, Indonesia, on the margins of which TPP Leaders are expected to meet as they have in past years. This meeting will be an important milestone as the 12 countries work intensively to conclude this landmark agreement this year.

On August 27, the TPP negotiations were temporarily adjourned so that negotiators could meet with 150 stakeholders on site from across the TPP region. Stakeholders made presentations to negotiators on a wide range of issues, and Chief Negotiators met informally with stakeholders to discuss in detail on specific issues of interest to them.