

## **Trans-Pacific Partnership Ministers Chart Path Forward on Key Issues and Confirm Next Steps on Japan's Entry**

The trade ministers of the 11 Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) countries -- which include Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States, and Vietnam -- met on the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade to chart a path forward on the remaining issues that will enable them to conclude the negotiations on a 2013 timeframe as instructed by TPP Leaders. They also discussed the status of their discussions with Japan on its interest in joining the TPP.

As the negotiating teams prepare for the next round in Lima, Peru, set for May 15-24, ministers agreed on next steps to advance the TPP talks in a range of areas. They directed negotiators to complete their work on some chapters and to accelerate progress on more challenging issues that remain including intellectual property, competition/State-owned enterprises, and environment, as well as on the market access packages for goods, services/investment, and government procurement. Ministers committed to intensifying their own engagement over the coming months to work out solutions to outstanding sensitive issues and to achieve the TPP Leaders' objective of a high-quality, ambitious, and comprehensive agreement this year.

Ministers also confirmed that each TPP member has concluded bilateral consultations with Japan regarding Japan's interest in joining the TPP. Today, Ministers agreed by consensus to finalize with Japan the process for entry in a manner that allows the negotiations to continue expeditiously toward conclusion -- as was done with other members that joined the negotiations in progress. Japan can then join the TPP negotiations upon completion of current members' respective domestic processes.

With Japan's entry, TPP countries would account for nearly 40 percent of global GDP and about one-third of all world trade. TPP Ministers noted that Japan's participation in the negotiation will underscore the economic significance of TPP and its promise as a pathway toward a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific.