



PRESS RELEASE

Trade Ministers Discuss Halting or Reforming the US-EU Trade Talks

Brussels, Belgium, 26 September 2016 — Last Friday, the French Trade Minister Matthias Fekl and the Austrian Vice-Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner proposed halting the EU-US trade talks, known as the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership or TTIP, during an informal meeting of trade ministers in Bratislava, Slovakia.

While ministers decided to continue TTIP negotiations, it is unlikely that an agreement would be reached before US President Barack Obama leaves office in January.

At the same time, German Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Matthias Machnig requested that member states give the European Commission a new mandate to negotiate the agreement.

“If member countries feel we need a new mandate, that is to be decided,” said the European Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström during the press conference following the ministerial meeting.

In public statements earlier this month, Austrian, Belgian, French and German politicians questioned whether the trade talks should continue.

“The proposal to halt the negotiations is a response to the calls from the public. It demonstrates the political will to halt the current race to the bottom trade negotiations and instead drive a trade agenda that is fair and will be in the long-term interests of people and the environment,” says David Azoulay, Senior Attorney and Environmental Health Program Director at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

“While this is a small step to the right direction, trade ministers also signaled their intention to move forward and sign the EU-Canada trade deal, known as CETA. This decision is a paradox as CETA poses similar threats to democracy, public health, and the environment. Both parties will now discuss whether to agree on an accompanying declaration, yet it is hard to imagine that such a declaration would address the serious concerns with the current text,” adds Azoulay.

Last month activists filed a complaint against CETA’s early implementation to the German Constitutional Court.

“The EU TTIP negotiators have crossed a number of the European Parliament’s ‘red lines’ established to protect people’s health from chemicals, particularly endocrine disrupting chemicals. It is no wonder that politicians are considering replacing the current mandate for the European Commission to negotiate the agreement,” adds Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

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Note for editors:

CIEL and HEAL coordinate a campaign — *TTIP: Private profit versus public health* — which calls on negotiators to 1) exclude chemicals, pesticides and other sensitive sectors from the EU-US trade talks; 2) exclude all elements of the current EU deregulatory agenda from being embedded in a legally binding trade agreement; and 3) exclude all provisions that would enable multinational corporations to bypass domestic courts and sue the EU and its Member States, via the so-called Investor State Dispute Settlement or Investment Court System.

Resources:

Germany and France push for pause in EU-US trade talks (Financial Times): [link](#).

Open letter 65+ NGOs sent to President Schulz: [link](#).

Campaign website: [link](#).

NGOs launch massive lawsuit against EU-Canada trade deal (DeutscheWelle): [link](#).

EU-U.S. trade talks seem unbalanced, may need pause: Belgian PM (Reuters): [link](#).

Austrian economy minister adds his ‘nein’ to TTIP debate (Reuters): [link](#).

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The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) — HEAL is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). We demonstrate how policy changes can help protect health and enhance people’s quality of life.