

# EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

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## PRIORITIES FOR THE ICELANDIC CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE EFTA-COUNCIL SPRING 2006

The Icelandic Chair bases its priorities for the first half of 2006 on the main conclusions reached at the EFTA Council meeting at Ministerial level in Geneva on 29 November 2005.

### 1. Third-country relations

#### 1.1 Existing free trade agreements

The Chair's objective is to hold Joint Committee meetings under existing free trade agreements with the following partners:

- **Chile**
- **Turkey**
- **Macedonia**
- **Jordan**

#### 1.2 Negotiations

The Chair's objectives are to:

- Sign the FTA with **SACU** as early as possible in the SACU region;
- Conclude negotiations in substance with **Thailand**;
- Start free trade negotiations with **Algeria**;
- Follow up on the constructive signals from Canada given at the meeting between the chief negotiators last autumn, aiming at an early resumption of free trade negotiations with **Canada**;
- Continue to work towards finalising the free trade negotiations with **Egypt**.

#### 1.3 Partner countries

The Chair's objectives are to:

- Hold a meeting with the **GCC** (Gulf Cooperation Council) with a view to prepare for the start of free trade negotiations;
- Hold a Joint Committee meeting with **Mercosur** to take stock of issues concerning the possible establishment of a free trade area;

- Be prepared to hold a Joint Committee meeting with **Ukraine** to launch free trade negotiations as soon as negotiations on WTO accession have been concluded;
- Follow up contacts with **Albania** and **Serbia-Montenegro** to review trade relations and explore further steps including possible technical co-operation projects;
- Conduct the agreed feasibility study with **Indonesia** on a possible future trade agreement;
- To agree on a framework agreement on trade and economic co-operation with the **Russian Federation** and to work towards launching free trade negotiations as soon as negotiations on WTO accession have been concluded;
- Conclude a Declaration of Co-operation with **Peru**.

#### **1.4. Prospective partner countries**

The Chair's objectives are to:

- Continue to share with its EFTA partners experiences and conclusions of the ongoing joint feasibility study on possible free trade agreement with **China** and continue efforts to convince China of the merits of an EFTA approach;
- Building upon the ongoing joint feasibility study for an FTA between **Japan** and Switzerland and continue efforts at various levels to convince Japan of the merits of an EFTA approach;
- To prepare for exploratory contacts at political and officials level with **India** in order to strengthen trade relations;
- Follow closely developments with regards to the **US**;
- Follow closely developments with regards to ASEAN countries such as **Malaysia** and/or **Vietnam**;
- Evaluate the possibilities for engaging with new partners in Africa.

## **2. The World Trade Organization**

Regarding on-going work in the WTO, the Chair will continue the well established practice of having exchanges of views between the EFTA States and especially to monitor the further development of the Doha-round. It will also follow up ongoing work in the Committee for Regional Trade Agreements.

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