



The second Joint Committee of the EU-Japan Agreement for an Economic Partnership

(Draft) Joint Minutes

Brussels and Tokyo (*via videoconference*), 1 February 2021

On 1 February 2021, the Joint Committee established by the Agreement between the European Union (EU) and Japan for an Economic Partnership (hereinafter referred to as “the Agreement”) held its second meeting by video-conference. The meeting was co-chaired by the Executive Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, MOTEGI Toshimitsu.

EVP Dombrovskis and Minister Motegi confirmed the importance of a full and effective implementation of the Agreement, which remains the EU’s and Japan’s joint political priority. The upcoming Committee on Government Procurement was mentioned as an example of important ongoing implementation work. They acknowledged positive developments in cooperation in spite of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international trade.

The co-chairs in particular highlighted the decisions of the Joint Committee with regard to the amendments to the Agreement, which entered into force on the date of the second Joint Committee meeting: the enlargement of the list of geographical indications protected under the Agreement and the listing of additional UNECE vehicle regulations that both Parties apply.

In addition, the Joint Committee took stock of and welcomed the progress made on customs procedures, in particular the full implementation of the actions identified in June 2019 by the Committee on Rules of Origin and Customs-Related Matters. Furthermore, the Joint Committee noted and welcomed the implementation of phase 2 of the authorisation of oenological practices, which have brought Japan’s and the EU’s wine standards closer to each other. Both sides also acknowledged the importance to continue engaging with the view to maximize the Agreement benefits for SMEs. A first activity report on SME needs and support will be submitted at the third meeting of the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee discussed the state of play as regards bilateral trade in agricultural products. The Committee acknowledged the good cooperation on the operation of tariff-rate quotas, which will be taken further under the auspices of the Committee on Trade in Goods. As regards SPS measures, the EU co-chair recalled that multiple EU agricultural products do not benefit from access to the Japanese market due to import measures. He

stressed the expectation for more expeditious product approval procedures and recalled several practical steps to achieve that result, by ensuring that country-specific procedures in Japan take fully into account the common regulations that apply throughout the EU, thus avoiding duplicative assessments. The EU co-chair also referred to the importance of the mutual recognition of the principle of regionalisation. The Japanese co-chair recalled the existence of remaining import measures in the EU on Japanese food products that were introduced following the Great East Japan Earthquake and expressed Japan's expectation for the removal of those import measures. The Japanese co-chair also stressed that SPS issues should be addressed based on sound science, and he referred to the progress made by Japan, such as lifting of import restriction on beef from Spain and pork from Hungary. Both sides confirmed that they will work to ensure swifter handling of SPS procedures and confirmed that there will be contact at technical level to discuss improvements.

The Joint Committee referred to the review clause on data flows in the chapter on Trade in Services, Investment Liberalisation and Electronic Commerce of the Agreement, and concluded that the Committee on Trade in Services, Investment Liberalisation and Electronic Commerce would hold exploratory discussions to reassess the need for inclusion of provisions on the free flow of data into the Agreement at the next meeting of the Committee.

Both sides emphasised the importance of green technologies and the needed structural changes in their economies to address global environmental challenges. They referred to the objective of ensuring that our respective regulations in that area are, to the greatest possible extent, compatible with each other. The EU explained the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and the Circular Economy Action Plan as two important EU green deal initiatives for green growth. Japan explained its initiatives to deal with climate change. Both sides confirmed that they will promote cooperation in the area of green growth in international organisations and fora. The EU side expressed in particular interest to cooperate with Japan in the area of offshore wind power, in order to guarantee unrestricted access to the best available technologies. The Joint Committee encouraged a better coordination between the EU and Japanese competent authorities on this issue.

The co-chairs discussed broader cooperation issues, including the engagement with other international partners such as China and the US, the urgency to make progress on WTO reform, and international trade in COVID-19 vaccines.

The Joint Committee envisaged the organisation of a stock-taking meeting in six-months' time in order to monitor progress in the areas it identified.
