



## **The third meeting of the Joint Committee of the EU-Japan Agreement for an Economic Partnership**

### **Joint Minutes**

**Brussels and Tokyo (*via videoconference*), 25 March 2022**

On 25 March 2022, 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 third meeting by video-conference. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, HAYASHI Yoshimasa and the Executive Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis DOMBROVSKIS.

The Joint Committee welcomed the successful and timely second amendment of the EPA list of protected GIs, which entered into force on 1 February 2022. That amendment proves the EU’s and Japan’s continuous good cooperation in this area. The Joint Committee also commended the fact that trade in goods between Japan and the EU recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and renewed their commitment to further promote bilateral trade.

The Joint Committee assessed the implementation of the Agreement particularly in the areas of government procurement, regulatory cooperation, trade and sustainable development, and small and medium-sized enterprises. As for government procurement, the Joint Committee confirmed some progress made related to “a single point of access to tenders” at the working level as well as its intention to further promote cooperation in this area.

In the discussion on regulatory cooperation, the EU co-chair expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy for their cooperation in the field of offshore wind power and expressed his hope to enhance such cooperation in the future. The co-chairs recognized the meaningfulness of joint experts’ workshops in this field and the EU co-chair reiterated the EU’s proposal to start working towards one to be held in 2022. They supported continuous EU-Japan cooperation for a greener society.

The Joint Committee also welcomed the finalization of the technical work on the list of experts on trade and sustainable development and the rules of procedure for expert panels, which are to be formally adopted by the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development. The Joint Committee also welcomed the start of the Diet process in Japan toward possible ratification of the ILO fundamental convention C105. The EU co-chair enquired about work in Japan towards the ratification of C111.

Furthermore, both sides acknowledged the importance of continued engagement with a view to maximizing benefits of the Agreement for SMEs, including by providing information in English. In this respect, the co-chairs commended the activity report on SME needs and support, which was compiled by the EU-Japan SME contact points and submitted to the Joint Committee ahead of the meeting.

The Joint Committee discussed the state of play as regards bilateral trade in agricultural products. It took stock of and welcomed the progress made on the operation of two tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) and reaffirmed the need for continuous cooperation on monitoring the use of TRQs in the future. As regards SPS measures, the EU co-chair stressed the expectation for a more expeditious and simplified product approval procedure and the political importance of showing progress, and recalled several EU proposals made to this end already in the past such as fast track applications building on already assessed EU harmonized legislation and grouping of EU Member States applications. In order to make meaningful progress, the EU co-chair invited Japan to step up bilateral work on the above mentioned proposals through regular technical meetings. The EU co-chair also pointed out the importance of accelerating progress on the project for mutual recognition of zoning in the area of animal health. The Japanese co-chair pointed out that Japan had responded to the EU's suggestion to the extent possible, as long as scientifically supported. The Japanese co-chair also referred to the progress made by Japan such as lifting of age restriction on beef from Denmark and import restriction on pork from Belgium and Czech Republic, and stressed the need to continue working on both sides' issues within the limits of what can be done based on scientific evidence. The Japanese co-chair also recalled the remaining import measures on Japanese food products introduced by the EU following the Great East Japan Earthquake and requested lifting them based on scientific evidence by the end of this year. The EU co-chair underlined that the measures are to be evaluated in accordance with the original schedule and based on available evidence, in consultation with the EU Member States.

The Joint Committee referred to the review clause on the free flow of data in the chapter on Trade in Services, Investment Liberalisation and Electronic Commerce of the Agreement, and confirmed its intention to continue discussions to reassess the need for inclusion of provisions on the free flow of data into the Agreement.

In addition, the co-chairs discussed broader cooperation issues, including issues related to the situation in Ukraine, the WTO, and COVID-19. As for Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the co-chairs reaffirmed their commitment to continue sanctions against Russia in coordination with G7 and like-minded partners. On COVID-19 response, the Japanese co-chair expressed his appreciation for the uninterrupted export of coronavirus vaccines from the EU to Japan and the co-chairs confirmed their continuous cooperation in handling the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Joint Committee confirmed that it would organize a 2022 EPA Midterm Review Meeting, a stock-taking exercise at senior official level, in about six-month time in order to monitor progress in the areas it identified.

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