



**Summary of the Seventh Joint Dialogue with Civil Society under
Chapter 16 (Trade and Sustainable Development) of the Agreement
between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership
Tokyo, 4 March 2026**

The seventh meeting of the Joint Dialogue with Civil Society (JDCCS), held under Chapter 16 (Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD)) of the Agreement between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership (“the Agreement”), was held on 4 March 2026 in Tokyo in a hybrid format.

The Japan co-chair/moderator welcomed participants and outlined the session agenda which included presentations and items relating to trade and sustainable development, presented by civil society organizations from Japan and the EU. It was noted that their views would inform the upcoming Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development. The co-chair/moderator subsequently shared an overview of relevant developments and discussions between Japan and the EU since the last Joint Dialogue, including but not limited to: information-sharing through the Working Group on Circular Economy, policy discussion on issues relating to a safe and healthy working environment at the 20th Japan-EU Labour Symposium, and coordinated policy dialogue on the Responsible Business Conduct through a JBCE-EBC-OECD joint event.

The EU co-chair underlined the importance of the EU and Japan’s trade and investment relationship, alongside the value of input from the Joint Dialogue with Civil Society to the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development.

STATEMENTS BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETIES

The Japanese Domestic Advisory Group member stressed the importance of both parties working together to ensure effective implementation of the TSD chapter. The EU Domestic Advisory Group chair encouraged further engagement and cooperation between both parties, especially in terms of decarbonization, clean technology, and resilient supply chains. The EU Domestic Advisory Group chair stressed the need to promote decent work in compliance with the ILO Convention 111 (C111), and pointed to the continued challenges in regard to implementation of C87 and C98 in Japan.

TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING TRADE AND CLIMATE ACTION

Civil society stakeholders shared questions about the design and impact of policies of both parties, such as Japan's GX- ETS (Green Transformation Emissions Trading System) and the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). An EU civil society representative presented on risks associated with greenwashing and highlighted the importance of facilitating a structured dialogue on green claims convergence on the government level through frameworks such as the Japan-EU Green Alliance. The Japanese government provided further policy updates on its Premiums and Representations Act, as well as the Environmental Labelling Guidelines. Another EU civil society representative presented on maritime transport and just transition, and argued for making maritime transport a new focus area of the Green Alliance and intensifying cooperation between both parties on a just transition within the IMO Net-Zero Framework and Fund. In the subsequent discussion, there was an explanation by the Japanese government on its decarbonization efforts related to green shipping corridors and its contribution to the development of guidelines on training for seafarers at the IMO.

The discussion proceeded to cover sustainable forestry management and biodiversity, with both governments reiterating their support for international biodiversity frameworks. Japanese civil society provided the current situation of global deforestation, in particular cattle-led deforestation and emission in Brazil. The Japanese government emphasized that enhancing the sustainable supply chains that decouple agricultural production from deforestation was important, and that apart from legal regulations, there existed a range of alternative measures to prevent deforestation. These included the adoption of private certification systems, the promotion of voluntary guidelines, and the enhancement of capacity-building efforts in producing countries. Subsequently, the EU co-chair explained that the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is a pioneering legislation to promote consumption of deforestation-free products and while providing additional time for implementation, remains fully committed to its original objectives.

TRADE AND LABOUR

A Japanese civil society representative noted hurdles for ratification of C111 (such as restrictions placed on expression of political opinion by civil servants) and implementation of C87 and C98 in Japan. An EU civil society representative subsequently highlighted the importance of upholding high labour standards and effective implementation of ILO Conventions, and called on the Japanese government to focus on raising awareness, enacting relevant legislation, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders by partnering with employers' and workers' organizations. Another EU civil society representative presented on the issues of forced labour and child labour in global supply chains, and raised concerns about Technical Intern Trainees in Japan with particular focus on the role of receiving and sending agencies. In the subsequent discussion, the Japanese

government set out its ongoing work towards ratification of C111 and implementation of C87 and C98, and presented its project in Southeast Asia, tackling forced labour in critical mineral supply chains. As for C155, the EU co-chair welcomed the Japanese Diet approving the ratification and provided an update on the EU side, including France's and Greece's recent decisions to deposit their instruments of ratification of C155.

CROSS-CUTTING ASPECTS OF TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A Japanese civil society representative provided insights from a business perspective on the CSRD and CSDDD. In particular, he asked for harmonisation of definitions in CSRD and CSDDD, alignment with international frameworks (e.g., ISBB), and the timely adoption of non-EU standards (NESRS) of CSRD and guidelines of CSDDD. He put forward the recommendations on the forced labour regulation, including the need for clear guidance for economic operators, training and capacity building support, as well as consistency with existing industry standards and EU legislative requirements. This was followed by an EU civil society representative's updates on the proposed changes to the CSDDD by various omnibus packages. His presentation particularly focused on main changes made through the omnibus packages, including but not limited to: delayed monitoring intervals, narrower definition of stakeholder, and removal of obligation to terminate a business relationship. Another Japanese civil society representative stressed the importance of meaningful stakeholder engagement while providing some updates on Japan's recently revised National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. As for the CSDDD, she noted that meaningful engagement with stakeholders will be key to obtain "reasonably available information." In line with the OECD guidelines she highlighted the importance of training and capacity building, promotion of constructive dialogue with stakeholders and involving third countries.

These presentations were followed by reflections on the JBCE-EBC-OECD joint event held on February 25. A Japanese participant presented key takeaways from the event from a viewpoint of Japanese companies, and emphasized the need for trusted mediators and structured dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders to further advance shared responsibility in responsible business conduct. An EU participant shared a perspective on the event, and stressed that meaningful engagement with stakeholders is not only about compliance but also the relationship companies build with stakeholders in supply chains.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The moderator summarized the discussions during the JDCS and confirmed that stakeholder input would inform the upcoming Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development meeting on March 18.

The EU co-chair confirmed that the points discussed would help shape the agenda of the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development, and welcomed the development in the Central Environment Council with the formal nomination process of its member to carry out Domestic Advisory Group activities.

EU-JAPAN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)

TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 7TH JOINT DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

4 MARCH 2026

14:45-18:15 TOKYO (6:45-10:15 BRUSSELS)

AGENDA

- 1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**
- 2. STATEMENTS BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY**
- 3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**
 - TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING TRADE AND CLIMATE ACTION**

Topics for discussion:

- *Issues in the Institutional Design of GXETS*
- *The Stance of the Japanese Business Community on Trade, Environment and Economic Security, EU-CBAM*
- *Rengo Policy Carbon Neutral 2050*
- *Avoiding Greenwashing*
- *EU-Japan Green Alliance*
- *Challenges in Establishing Deforestation/Conversion Free Supply Chains*
- *Updates on sustainable forest management from an EU perspective*

■ **TRADE AND LABOUR**

Topics for discussion:

- *Challenges Japan Faces in Ratifying and Implementing the ILO Core Conventions*
- *Upholding high labour standards and the effective implementation of ILO conventions (incl. follow-up of the work done, notably the pending case to the ILO CAS: C87 and C111)*
- *Latest development on forced labour*

■ **CROSS-CUTTING ASPECTS OF TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Topics for discussion:

- *Latest developments and reactions on Responsible Business Conduct/ National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights/CSDDD implementation and the Omnibus package*
- *Building Capacity and Enabling Environments for Responsible Business Conduct in Global Supply Chains*

Summary and conclusions