

# EU statement at the 12<sup>th</sup> Trade Policy Review of the European Union, 08/07/15

*Opening and Closing Remarks by Ambassador Angelos Pangratis*

## **A. Opening Remarks of the Second day of the EU TPR**

Mr Chairman, dear colleagues, let me start by saying that I am glad to be here today for this second day of the EU TPR. Unfortunately, I missed the first day, this was not an easy decision but the referendum in Greece and what goes with it was an historic moment for Greece and for the EU and I felt that I needed to be there.

I would like first to express my appreciation for the constructive and positive spirit of Monday's discussions and for the thoughtful approach by yourself, Mr Chairman, by Discussant Ambassador Duque in his remarks on EU trade policy, and then by almost 50 WTO Members who commented on the trade policy of the EU - a rather extraordinary number that indicates the importance and great interest that Members attach to the EU's economic, trade and investment policies. I would also like to thank the WTO Secretariat for their support and my own colleagues in the EU team for their efforts in responding to the questions and comments by Members.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank all those colleagues from other members who offered kind words in their statements to me, to the excellent team that I have been privileged to lead for the last few years and to our work here in Geneva.

As indicated on several occasions during this review, the EU is among the top three trade partners for the majority of WTO Members. It is thus unsurprising that we have received such a significant number of questions from our partners – both before and well after the deadline, I must say - to which we have done our very best to respond. In fact and to support this with numbers: we replied by 29 June to the 873 questions received by the Members by the deadline (8 June) and we replied yesterday to the 400 questions received after the deadline until end of June. We will reply to the outstanding questions that arrived indeed very late before the review as well as to the additional follow-up questions received from some Members, within the deadline foreseen for this exercise.

As a general comment, let me assure you that the EU is well aware of its responsibility regarding its trade policies that has a direct impact on a big part of the WTO membership. At same time, looking at the statements made on Monday, I see also a



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considerable appreciation of the EU as an open and transparent partner that is committed to the WTO and to the multilateral trading system. Nevertheless, we have taken good note of the issues identified and raised by Members and my colleagues will address them comprehensively in a moment.

Before doing that, allow me to briefly make a comment on the situation in Greece that was also raised by a number of colleagues in their statements.

We have of course taken note of the concerns - and in some cases deep concern - expressed by many members relating to developments in Greece and with respect to the euro zone. Given our overall economic size and source of import demand for many Members, we understand that any macroeconomic risk will always be monitored closely by our trading partners.

At this stage, and within the scope of our exercise here in the WTO, let me only make four brief points.

First, issues relating to the euro zone have no direct bearing from practical, operational and technical point of view on the functioning of the EU as such and on the conduct of the Common Commercial Policy which is common to all 28 Member States.

Second, we are confident that the financial stability of the euro zone is under all scenarios ensured. Obviously, the on-going developments could, potentially, represent a limited source of downside risk on our economic forecasts for growth and domestic demand, but it is simply premature to speculate on this. Our leaders are working intensively with the declared aim to reach a solution that will preserve the integrity and stability of the euro zone in its entirety.

Thirdly, it is important not to misunderstand what really happened during these last days in Greece itself. The following day after the referendum, leaders of political parties, representing more than 87% of the total electorate, reconfirmed without any ambiguity the support of the Greek people to the EU, to the euro and to our common European future. The result of the referendum does not mean at all rejection of the EU or the euro by the Greek population. This is an aspect of obvious and crucial importance that should not be misunderstood and it is an important foundation of the negotiations that are taking place right now between Greece and its creditors.

Finally, I invite you not to underestimate the ability of the EU to do what it has done consistently all through its history when faced with crisis, i.e. advance and improve its integration while dealing with these crises. The current situation is certainly very challenging but the EU can overcome the challenge once again by becoming stronger, better and more balanced.

Having said this, please let me now give the floor to my colleague, Mr Denis Redonnet, who will address in substance the impressive list of points raised on Monday in Members' statements. Thank you Mr Chairman.

## **B. Closing Remarks of the Second day of the EU TPR**

I heard a lot of words of appreciation both for key aspects of the Trade Policy of the EU and also for our efforts to reply in depth to the questions that were raised. In conclusion I want to underline only two points from our discussions:

First, I also heard considerable recognition for the reforms already undertaken by the EU. Such comments concerned Public Procurement and other areas and particularly our Common Agricultural Policy. In this respect, I have to underline something I have been repeating in this organisation constantly. The success of the WTO to create common rules and disciplines that shape practices of members need to be measured not only directly on the basis of the results of the negotiation and the

negotiation rounds but also from the extent that these common rules and disciplines shape the reform that take place in between negotiating rounds, particularly in areas like Agricultural Policies where changes of national practices require important reforms of national legislations.

Second, the EU trade policy projects an image of obvious dynamism from both the agenda of negotiations with our partners but also from important internal, autonomous reform in several areas. I believe that the TPR illustrated convincingly the commitment of the EU to openness and transparency for all these important processes, the genuine EU willingness to constantly improve transparency and better listen to inputs from domestic stockholders but also from negotiating partners.

I thank again on behalf of the EU and my colleagues the Chair, our discussant, the secretariat and all the members.