

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATIONS INTENSIFY IN SINGAPORE

1 The 16th round of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations in Singapore concluded today, after 10 days of intensive negotiations, involving more than 600 delegates from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the United States, Singapore and Vietnam.

2 To achieve the TPP leaders' desire to conclude negotiations in 2013, the chief negotiators and 20 working groups pursued talks with renewed focus and vigour in Singapore. The negotiating teams made solid progress in bridging gaps in a number of areas. Good progress was made in working groups on Regulatory Coherence, Telecommunications, Customs and Development, and remaining work in these areas will be taken up in negotiation rounds closer to the finalisation of the agreement. Talks on Services, E-Commerce, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade and Government Procurement also continued in earnest.

3 Singapore's Chief Negotiator and Director-General of Trade at Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ms Ng Bee Kim, said: "There was a distinct sense that negotiations were shifting gears. As host of this round, the Singapore team was committed to invigorating negotiations, such as by exploring fresh configurations for talks. One innovation was for some working groups to break into smaller informal meetings as part of the official negotiation agenda to tease out the more difficult issues with fresh eyes. We are glad that it worked well and helped move our negotiations along."

4 TPP countries recognise that there remain a range of more challenging areas, such as Intellectual Property, Environment, Competition and Labour, which will require further deliberation amongst TPP countries. In Goods, Services, Investment and Government Procurement, negotiators continued efforts to develop an ambitious and comprehensive market access package that would create new opportunities and maximise the TPP's potential as a regional trade agreement to benefit all TPP countries.

5 Despite a demanding schedule of meetings, TPP negotiators also engaged stakeholders to hear their views across a range of areas on proposed elements of the TPP agreement. The Singapore round drew around 300 local and international stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, labour groups and academia.

6 The 17th round of negotiations will take place in Lima, Peru from 15 to 24 May 2013. TPP ministers are also expected to meet on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade meeting, in Surabaya, Indonesia from 20 to 21 April 2013.

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
13 March 2013