

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SINGAPORE AND THE EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION
LAUNCH NEGOTIATIONS ON DIGITAL ECONOMY AGREEMENT**

Singapore and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have launched negotiations on an EFTA-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement (DEA).

2 This was announced via a videoconference today between Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations S Iswaran, Liechtenstein Minister for Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport & Chair of the EFTA Council Dominique Hasler, Switzerland Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research Guy Parmelin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland in Geneva Einar Gunnarsson, and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to Geneva Petter Ølberg. The EFTA States and Singapore have also issued a joint statement on the launch of DEA negotiations, which is appended at **Annex A**.

3 EFTA and Singapore share strong trade and investment relations underpinned by the 2003 EFTA-Singapore Free Trade Agreement. The DEA will allow Singapore and EFTA to advance cooperation in the digital domain, including advancing end-to-end trade, enabling trusted data flows, and facilitating a trusted and secure digital environment. The DEA will also build on and complement ongoing plurilateral efforts including negotiations on the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce.

4 Mr Iswaran said, "Singapore and the EFTA States are like-minded and digitally progressive partners. The DEA will further strengthen our strong and growing bilateral economic relationship, enabling us to unlock new opportunities in the digital realm for our people and businesses. It will also establish frameworks to promote more seamless cross-border digital trade, connectivity, and data flows between the EFTA and Singapore. I look forward to continued and closer partnership with EFTA as we work to conclude expeditiously on the DEA negotiations expeditiously."

Annex A: Photo of Signing

Annex B: Joint Statement by the EFTA States and Singapore on the Launch of Negotiations on a Digital Economy Agreement

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Annex A

Photo of the signing



Caption: Today, Minister S Iswaran and the Ministers and Ambassadors of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) announced the launch of negotiations on the EFTA-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement.

Annex B

Joint Statement by the EFTA States and Singapore on the Launch of Negotiations on a Digital Economy Agreement

Today marks the launch of negotiations between the EFTA States and Singapore on a Digital Economy Agreement.

The EFTA States and Singapore share robust and longstanding economic relations. Our trade and investment linkages have been growing strongly, underpinned by the EFTA-Singapore Free Trade Agreement that entered into force in 2003.

The Digital Economy Agreement will further strengthen this partnership and create new opportunities for companies and individuals of the five countries. As digitally progressive and like-minded economic partners, the EFTA States and Singapore are committed to open and connected digital economies. We recognise the potential of coherent rules on digital trade to provide a clear and secure framework that fosters trade in goods and services. Through the digital trade provisions that we aim to put in place, EFTA and Singapore will build on and complement other international processes and initiatives including the ongoing negotiations in the context of the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce.

Together, the EFTA States and Singapore can play a leading role in setting high-standard digital trade rules between our regions and raising the ambition of digital standards globally.

Dominique Hasler, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport, Liechtenstein & Chair of the EFTA Council

S Iswaran, Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations, Singapore

Guy Parmelin, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, Switzerland

Martin Eyjólfsson, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iceland

Petter Ølberg, Ambassador, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Norway, Geneva