

For Immediate Release

**SECOND MEETING OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION-SINGAPORE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (EUSFTA)
TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (TSD) BOARD**

1. From 22 to 23 March 2023, Singapore and the EU convened the second meeting of the EUSFTA TSD Board, comprising officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE), the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), and their EU counterparts, in Brussels, Belgium.
2. The Singapore and EU officials welcomed the EUSFTA's smooth implementation, including for the TSD Chapter. They exchanged updates on Singapore's and the EU's ambitious agendas for trade and sustainable development, including the clean energy transition, circular economy, and Singapore's Green Economy Agreement initiative; as well as enhancements to labour policies such as stronger protections for platform workers. Both sides also discussed possible areas for future exchanges and collaboration, including on clean energy, carbon-related measures, workplace safety & health, and protection for platform workers.
3. Alongside the TSD board meeting, the EU and Singapore organised the second TSD Public Stakeholders' Forum on 23 March 2023. Chaired jointly by Singapore and EU officials, the Forum was attended by Singapore and EU business, labour and environmental stakeholders. The Singapore and EU stakeholders had good exchanges on possible areas of cooperation between the Singapore and EU governments and civil society, and shared insightful perspectives on trade, environment and labour issues.
4. The joint statement of the second EU-Singapore TSD Board Meeting can be found in [Annex A](#). An overview of the TSD Chapter can be found in [Annex B](#).

Ministry of Trade and Industry

23 March 2023

Annex A: Joint statement of the first EU-Singapore TSD Board Meeting to the TSD Public Stakeholders Forum

Annex B: Background on the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and the Trade and Sustainable development Chapter

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JOINT STATEMENT OF THE SECOND EU-SINGAPORE TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (TSD) MEETING TO THE TSD PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

1 On 22 March 2023, European Commission and Singapore officials held the second European Union-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) Board via a hybrid (in-person and on-line) meeting in Brussels. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Chua Shun Loong, Director, Europe and Central Asia Division in the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ms. Ewa Synowiec, Principal Adviser, European Commission Directorate General for Trade. From the EU side, representatives from the Directorates-General TRADE, ENV, CLIMA, ENER, TAXUD and EMPL and from the EU Delegation to Singapore participated. For Singapore, representatives from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE), National Environment Agency (NEA), and the Mission of Singapore to the EU participated.

Establishment of TSD Board

2 The meeting agenda was adopted by the board.

3 The TSD Board recognised that the EU and Singapore are like-minded partners upholding the open and rules-based multilateral trading system that has underpinned global peace and prosperity. Against the backdrop of global uncertainties, the EUSFTA builds on our longstanding cooperation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international fora, reaffirming our shared commitment to free trade and our strong stand against protectionism. In addition, the EU and Singapore are keen to continue strengthening our collaboration on trade and sustainable development.

Updates on the Institutional Setup

4 The EU and Singapore updated each other on their respective on-going processes on the institutional setup of the TSD Board. The TSD Board confirmed that both sides would continue their work towards establishing the rules of procedure as well as a list of individuals who would be willing and able to serve as experts, as envisioned in paragraphs 2 to 4 of Article 12.17 of the EUSFTA.

Updates on recent trade and sustainable development initiatives/ policy developments

5 The EU presented the Commission Communication “The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth” adopted on 22 June 2022 (“the TSD Communication”). The EU underlined that TSD chapters are grounded on key international labour and environmental/climate standards

shared by the EU and by its trading partners. The TSD Communication includes the strengthening of enforcement (but without changing the prevalence of the EU cooperative approach), as well as the role of civil society. The EU gave a detailed presentation of the six priorities of the TSD Communication and, in this context, expressed interest in exploring ideas on the implementation of the TSD chapter in the TSD Board. The EU and Singapore agreed to continue discussions and may organise a technical meeting as appropriate.

6 Singapore presented on its Green Economy Agreement (GEA) initiative. As a first-of-its-kind, the GEA will catalyse economic growth and job creation in green sectors, whilst simultaneously promoting decarbonisation and accelerating the transition to a green economy. . It also serves as a pathfinder for international co-operation to advance rule-making and global standards in trade and environmental sustainability. In this context, Singapore expressed interest in working with the EU on shared areas of interest in the emerging global green economy, and looked forward to continued discussions on this.

Trade and Labour

7 The EU and Singapore recalled and welcomed the decision of the 110th International Labour Conference of June 2022 by which a safe and healthy working environment was added to the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. They presented their respective activities aimed at translating the ILO governing body decision in their respective labour systems and enhancing workplace safety and health to ensure decent work for all workers.

8 Singapore presented on updates to its labour policies since the last TSD board meeting in 2019, including efforts to support its workforce and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Singapore also presented on its labour policies related to a safe and healthy work environment, which was in 2022 elevated as a new fundamental ILO principle and right at work.

9 The EU gave an update on labour market developments and recent initiatives related to decent work, in particular the Communication on Decent Work Worldwide. On the inclusion in 2022 of a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work, the EU underlined that all Member States already complied with the new principle and were positively considering pending ratifications of the two new ILO fundamental conventions (C155 on occupational safety and health & C187 on promotional framework for occupational safety and health). In terms of the developments in the area of occupational safety and health, the EU referred to the continuous reduction of fatal accidents at work in the EU, explained the current regulatory framework and the forward-looking strategic framework on health and safety at work for 2021-2027.

10 Both sides also exchanged on their respective initiatives to improve labour protection of persons performing platform work.

11 Singapore provided an update on its ongoing actions towards ratifying and effectively implementing ILO fundamental conventions, namely C087 (freedom of association & protection of the right to organise), C111 (discrimination (employment and occupation)), and C105 (abolition of forced labour). Singapore has ratified the two new ILO fundamental conventions C155 and C187.

12 The EU took note of the measures and efforts taken by Singapore and sought clarifications which Singapore addressed. Singapore and the EU agreed to continue to exchange information regarding trade and labour in future TSD Board meetings.

13 In terms of priority areas for future discussions in the TSD Board, the EU and Singapore highlighted continued and sustained efforts towards ratifying and effectively implementing the ILO fundamental conventions.

Trade and Environment

14 The EU and Singapore welcomed continued discussions on trade and environment issues and presented updates on trade-related aspects of their environmental policies since the last TSD board meeting in 2020.

15 In the context of the actions for reaching the EU's environmental and climate goals set out in the European Green Deal, the EU provided an overview of its Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), which proposes a model to reduce our consumption footprint and double Europe's circular material use rate in the coming decade. The updates included the March 2022 package, the November 2022 package, and next steps envisaged for Circular Economy policies in the EU. The EU strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles and a review of EU legislation on Packaging and Packaging Waste were covered in this context as requested by Singapore prior to the meeting.

16 In 2021, Singapore launched the Singapore Green Plan 2030 to galvanise a whole-of-nation movement and advance Singapore's national agenda on sustainable development. The Green Plan charts ambitious and concrete targets for Singapore for the rest of this decade. At the meeting, Singapore provided an update on its strategies on circular economy and waste management under its vision "Towards a Zero Waste Nation", which outlines Singapore's aim to reduce waste entering its landfill. Singapore also shared on its green public procurement processes, in which the public sector seeks to lead demand for greener solutions and influence greater adoption of sustainability practices in the industry.

17 The EU and Singapore also exchanged views on their respective positions and priorities ahead of the next round of UN negotiations for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

18 Both sides agreed to continue to exchange information regarding trade and environment in future TSD Board meetings, and other fora where appropriate. Furthermore, the EU and Singapore highlighted the importance of continuous implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

Trade, Climate, and Energy

19 Responding to Singapore's interest in the EU's experiences on cross-border electricity trade and grid resiliency, the EU shared its experience on policy, regulatory and technical aspects of cross-border electricity trading and for contingency planning for energy security in times of outages and intermittency. Both sides exchanged perspectives on key challenges and solutions that were put in place during the implementation of cross-border interconnectors. The EU and Singapore concurred on the importance of renewable energy, energy efficiency, as well as a flexible energy market as part of a sustainable energy system. Both sides agreed to explore collaboration on further exchanges of information in this area.

20 Singapore presented its National Hydrogen Strategy which outlines its plans to develop hydrogen as a major decarbonisation pathway to support its transition towards net zero by 2050. Singapore highlighted that hydrogen would complement and diversify its power mix alongside solar, imported electricity, and other potential low-carbon energy sources. Singapore also shared on its strategy to be a catalyst for the global transition towards greener shipping and aviation as the busiest container transshipment port and one of the leading air hubs in the world.

21 Both sides exchanged updates on recent developments in the area of climate action. The EU presented its over-arching climate-neutrality objective and the European Green Deal that underpins its achievement in a long-term, whole-of-society approach. In this context, the EU provided an overview of the state-of-play of the development and planning in terms of implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Singapore updated on its key steps that are being taken to address climate change, including its carbon tax, which is the first carbon pricing scheme in Southeast Asia. With regard to the CBAM, the EU explained its climate rationale behind the measure and its design allowing to consider decarbonisation efforts of its trading partners, such as reducing the CBAM on imported goods by the carbon price in the country of origin. Both sides agreed to continue discussions including on possibilities of working together.

22 The EU and Singapore noted their shared commitment to the full and timely implementation of their respective commitments under the Paris Agreement and reviewed key domestic policies to support its achievement and economic growth.

BACKGROUND ON THE EU-SINGAPORE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT AND THE TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER

EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA)

The EUSFTA, which entered into force on 21 November 2019, is the first free trade agreement (FTA) between the EU and an ASEAN Member State. As an ambitious and forward-looking agreement, it provides increased market access, addresses non-tariff barriers, and contains provisions on 21st century trade issues such as e-commerce, intellectual property, and sustainable development including renewable energy generation. As a pathfinder towards an eventual EU-ASEAN FTA, the EUSFTA also enhances region-to-region connectivity between the EU – the world’s largest single market, and ASEAN – the fourth largest economic bloc by 2030.

Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) and the EUSFTA

The EUSFTA contains strong rules on TSD, including the protection of labour rights and the environment. It reflects the EU and Singapore’s shared belief that economic development, social development, and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually-reinforcing components of sustainable development.

Under the TSD Chapter, the EU and Singapore agreed to set up a Board on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD Board), comprising EU and Singapore officials who are tasked with the effective implementation of the TSD Chapter. The EU and Singapore also agreed to establish new consultative mechanisms or make use of existing consultative mechanisms to seek advice from relevant domestic stakeholders on the implementation of the TSD Chapter.

Under the EUSFTA, the EU and Singapore committed to hold the first TSD Board meeting within two years of the agreement’s entry into force, and thereafter as necessary, to oversee the implementation of the TSD Chapter. The inaugural TSD Board meeting was held via videoconference in November 2020, within one year of the EUSFTA’s entry into force in 2019.