



MINISTÈRE
DE L'EUROPE
ET DES AFFAIRES
ÉTRANGÈRES



Informal meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council “Trade”



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Foreword by Mr. Franck Riester, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness

To build the European strategic autonomy that is required for us to be masters of our own destiny, to address the worsening global environmental and social balances, and to reduce the vulnerabilities of our supply chains, **we need an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy.**

Guided by the work that has been done since 2017 and by the European Commission's new trade policy strategy, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union is determined to **increase the trade policy's contribution to European prosperity and sovereignty.** The informal meeting of European Trade Ministers in Marseille will be a highlight of this agenda.

Our message is clear: **open global trade, based on universally respected rules and compliant with our values, is an opportunity for the EU,** for its citizens and economic actors, and for our trading partners.

Against this backdrop, the Trade Ministers Meeting will take stock of the EU's strategy to **support and reform the multilateral system.** The EU fully supports the World Trade Organization (WTO) in its comprehensive response to today's challenges and in the fight against the pandemic. But an ambitious reform of the WTO is essential in order to restore its effectiveness and relevance to serve a stable, sustainable international trade system based on fair rules.

Overhauling the partnership between the **EU and Africa** is central to our political priorities. This meeting will also be an opportunity to **work on strengthening our trade and investment relations** ahead of the European Union-African Union Summit of 17 to 18 February.

The Ministers will take stock of the **transatlantic trade relationship** and prospects to step up our cooperation ahead of the next US-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC), to be held in France in Spring.

The Ministers will also talk with the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA), addressing issues including ongoing legislative projects, which embody the priority of enhancing the EU's capacity to defend its interest and the full alignment of our trade policy with our sustainable development goals.

Expectations of Europe's trade policy are commensurate with the major challenges we must rise to together, as Europeans. The meeting in Marseille will provide a first response.

Franck Riester

INTRODUCTION

What is the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union?

What does the Presidency of the Council of the European Union involve?

A rotating Presidency

Each Member State holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months on a rotational basis. France will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU from 1 January to 30 June 2022. The presidency of the Council organises and presides over meetings, brokers compromises, adopts conclusions and ensures the coherency and continuity of the decision-making process. It also ensures effective cooperation between all Member States and acts as a liaison between the Council and the Commission and European Parliament.

What is the Council of the European Union?

Also called the Council of Ministers, or simply the Council, the Council of the European Union brings together the ministers of the EU Member States who meet in configurations by sector of activity. It serves as the co-legislator of the European Union, along with the European Parliament.

Concretely, ministers will chair 9 configurations of the Council of the EU: general affairs; economic and financial affairs; justice and home affairs; employment, social policy, health and consumer protection policy; competitiveness (internal market, industry, research and space); transport, telecommunications and energy; agriculture and fisheries; environment, education, youth, culture and sport. The Foreign Affairs Council is chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, currently Mr Josep Borell.

The Foreign Affairs Council is responsible for the European Union's External Action, which includes foreign policy, defence and security, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid. It is composed of the Foreign Ministers from all EU Member States. Meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council are organized by the Presidency of the Council of the EU and chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Each Presidency of the Council also organizes informal meetings related to a Council configuration in Brussels.

Informal meeting of the Trade Ministers of the European Union (Foreign Affairs Council « Trade »)

The Informal meeting of the Trade Ministers of the European Union is an opportunity for open, strategic discussions on the EU's trade policy priorities.

Figures: in 2020, the EU's trade totalled €3.646 trillion, making the Union the world's second largest trading power. Within the EU, 38 million jobs depend on European exports, including more than 4 million in France.

In accordance with its priorities, focused on the implementation of an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union has chosen to dedicate the meeting to structural subjects for the future of the international trade framework and for the European Union's trade relations with strategic partners:

A stocktake on the challenges faced by the WTO

During a working dinner, the European Trade Ministers and the Executive Vice President of the European Commission will discuss the EU's strategy for multilateral trade issues, ahead of the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference.

The defence of a stable, sustainable trade system based on fair rules is essential to avoid trade tensions and ensure the European Union's prosperity. The EU's engagement in multilateral negotiations is crucial to revitalize the WTO and spur on an ambitious reform of the Organization. This reform needs to ensure the application of existing rules, while also adapting them to current challenges in order to ensure fair competition in global trade and address environmental and public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic reflection on strengthening trade and investment relations between the EU and African countries

Overhauling the partnership between the EU and Africa is a priority for the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, particularly ahead of the EU-AU Summit in Brussels on 17 and 18 February. The meeting in Marseille will shed light on the commercial aspects of this relationship, building on the momentum generated at the conference entitled ["Trade relations between the EU and Africa: towards new partnerships"](#) held in Paris on 10 January.

Open discussions on the next phases of the EU-US trade relationship

The United States remains a crucial partner for the European Union and strengthening transatlantic ties is also a priority of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The pace of transatlantic trade relations increased in 2021, in part thanks to the solutions found to the Airbus-Boeing dispute in the spring and to the additional duties on steel and aluminium in the autumn. The launch of the US-EU Trade and Technology Council, which met for the first time on 19 September 2021 in Pittsburgh, will help drive this momentum in transatlantic relations, enabling greater coordination on issues that are structural for the future of our economies, such as the rules of use of emerging technologies, their role as regards digital and climate issues, the resilience of value chains and global commercial issues.

In this context, the meeting in Marseille will be an opportunity for the EU Trade Ministers and the Trade Commissioner to together consider the next steps for the transatlantic relationship, including preparation for the second meeting of the US-EU Trade and Technology Council which should take place in France during the spring.

AGENDA

13 February

19:30 – 22:00 Ministers' working dinner on trade multilateralism, attended by Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director-General.

14 February

08:00 – 9:00 Greeting of delegations by Franck Riester, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, at the Palais du Pharo.

09:00 – 09:15 Opening speech by the Minister Delegate.

09:15 – 10:45 Work session 1: Trade relations between Africa and the European Union.

11:00 – 12:40 Work session 2: Transatlantic trade relations and preparation of the next US-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting.

12:40 – 13:00 Family photo in front of the Palais du Pharo.

13:00 – 14:30 Working lunch with Mr Bernd Lange, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA).

14:45 – 16:00 Joint press conference by Franck Riester and Valdis Dombrovskis (host broadcaster and press).

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Presidency



FRANCK RIESTER
FRANCE
Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness

Commission



VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS
COMMISSION
Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Trade Commissioner

Ministers of Member States



JOZEF SÍKELA
CZECH REPUBLIC
Minister of Industry and Trade



ANNA HALLBERG
SWEDEN
Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs



XIANA MARGARIDA MÉNDEZ BÉRTOLO
SPAIN
Secretary of State for Trade



SOPHIE WILMÈS
BELGIUM
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions



ISTVÁN JOÓ
HUNGARY
Deputy State Secretary for External Economic Relations



JAN PAWELEC
POLAND
Director of the Department for International Trade



NIELS PETER HELTBERG
DENMARK
Director of Trade Policy



LOUCAS SYMEONIDES
CYPRUS
Director of Trade Policy and Bilateral Relations



LEO VARADKER
IRELAND
Tánaiste, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment



ARNOLDAS PRANCKEVIČIUS
LITHUANIA
Vice-Minister for European Affairs and Trade



IOANNIS SMYRLIS
GREECE
Secretary General for International Economic Affairs



MANLIO DI STEFANO
ITALIA
Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation



ZANDA KALNINA-LUKAŠEVICA
LATVIA
Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



JEAN ASSELBORN
LUXEMBOURG
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs



LIESJE SCHREINEMACHER
NETHERLANDS
Minister for Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation



JÁN ORAVEC
SLOVAKIA
State Secretary at the Ministry
of Economic Affairs



CARMELO INGUANEZ
MALTA
Ambassador of the Republic of
Malta to the French Republic



ANDRES SUTT
ESTONIA
Minister of Entrepreneurship
and Information Technology



ENCHO DIMITROV
BULGARIA
Advisor to the Bulgarian
Embassy



**MARGARETE
SCHRAMBÖCK**
AUSTRIA
Federal Minister for Digital and
Economic Affairs



DARIUS GEORGEL VODĂ
ROMANIA
Secretary General to the
Ministry of the Economy



VILLE SKINNARI
FINLAND
Minister for Development
Cooperation and Foreign Trade



ZDENKO LUCIĆ
CROATIA
State Secretary for Foreign
Trade and Development
Cooperation



UDO PHILIPP
GERMANY
State Secretary at the Federal
Ministry for Economic Affairs
and Climate Action



AUGUSTO SANTOS SILVA
PORTUGAL
Minister for Foreign Affairs



ZDRAVKO POČIVALŠEK
SLOVENIA
Minister of Economic
Development and Technology

Guests



**Dr. NGOZI OKONJO-
IWEALA**
WTO
Director General of the World
Trade Organization (WTO)



BERND LANGE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Chairman of the international
trade committee of the
European Parliament

HOST CITY - MARSEILLE



The Pharo Palace, ©jootcm

The second largest city in France, [Marseille](#) is a vibrant city on the shores of the Mediterranean with a dynamic energy that leaves no one indifferent. Formed in the heart of a natural rocky inlet over 2,600 years ago, France's oldest city has developed over the centuries. Today, it offers architectural treasures from various eras in addition to its remarkable natural heritage.

Along with the [Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Basilica](#), the Old Port of Marseille is one of the city's emblematic landmarks, located at the end of its renowned thoroughfare, La Canebière. At the entrance to the port, connected to the magnificent Fort Saint-Jean, the [MuCEM](#) is a 21st century museum inaugurated in 2013, which is the first major national museum dedicated to Mediterranean civilisations.



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