Singapore, 2nd of July 2018

JOINT STATEMENT BY BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

EU business calls for a quick ratification and entry into force of the EU-Singapore FTA.

The EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) which has recently been submitted to the Council for approval should be signed swiftly and ratified without delay to allow EU business to take full advantage of the opportunities created by the Agreement. As well as offering huge economic opportunities, the trade agreement also includes far reaching disciplines on trade and sustainable development that will serve as a benchmark for other Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The FTA negotiations were launched in 2010 and concluded in 2013. Following EU internal developments on investment dispute, the parties agreed to renegotiate the text on two occasions (in 2014 and 2017) and to split the agreement into two in 2018. It is therefore extremely crucial that both parties finally proceed with the ratification to allow its entry into force before the end of the current legislature in spring 2019. The undersigned associations call on the EU and its Member States to speed up the EUSFTA ratification process so that consumers and businesses on both sides can reap its intended benefits.

On the occasion of her visit to Singapore in March 2018 for the ASEAN Economic Ministers–EU Trade Commissioner consultations, Commissioner Cecilia Malmström stressed that: "this trade and investment agreement will confirm our strong engagement with Singapore and will open up a new dimension in our ties with Singapore and ASEAN."

The undersigned associations cannot agree more with this statement and are convinced that this agreement once ratified and approved should de facto trigger the progress on the ongoing bilateral trade negotiations in other countries of the region and eventually create the conditions for the launch of an EU-ASEAN free trade agreement.

Furthermore, major economies as Japan (2002), USA (2003) and China (2009) already have FTAs with Singapore fully enforced which has resulted in major competitive disadvantages and the creation of an unequal level playing field for EU businesses.
For the signatories of this letter the EUSFTA is a significant agreement:

1. **Economic importance:**

Singapore is a small city state but an economic powerhouse in Southeast Asia. It is by far the EU’s largest trading partner in ASEAN. More than 10,000 European companies have a regional office in Singapore and 700 European companies have located their regional headquarters in the city state to serve the whole region.

- The agreement will intensify trade between the EU and Singapore even further so that EU companies are able to grow and new jobs can be created.
- The EU is Singapore’s 2nd biggest trading partner in goods. By the entry into force of the agreement, the free access of goods into Singapore is cemented and customs duties on the products that are not free of customs duties yet will be scrapped, which will benefit EU companies.
- Furthermore, Singapore will ease several obstacles to trade besides its tariffs such as recognising EU standards and safety tests as well as labels and markings the EU uses for certain products. This will simplify and accelerate the export of goods of EU companies to Singapore.
- The agreement will open up Singapore’s markets to EU companies for services and government contracts which generates new business opportunities for EU companies: Singapore will offer better access to its market to EU companies active in specific sectors than it does to similar firms from elsewhere, whilst government procurement in Singapore is worth €20 billion each year.
- With the agreement into force, Singapore agrees to strengthen its existing geographical indications (GI) regime by setting up a system to register GIs in Singapore. Once registered in Singapore, around 190 GIs for wines, spirits and certain agricultural products will enjoy levels of protection equal to those in the EU. Better protection for such products will also improve Singapore consumers’ awareness of authentic top-quality EU GI products.
- Overall, the agreement includes a wide range of rules and regulations that bring greater certainty and increased transparency to business operations between the EU and Singapore which contributes to a more conducive business climate.
- The agreement is believed to pave the way for an agreement with the whole ASEAN region, thereby strengthening the EU’s position in Asia; a development that is welcomed sooner rather than later as it will provide EU companies better access to major growth economies and help reduce the EU’s trade deficit with the region.

2. **Geopolitical importance in strengthening EU-Singapore relations:**

- The EU is able to reinforce its belief in rule-based, open and fair trade. Especially in times of increased uncertainty around global trade, the EU can fill the void created by the hesitation of larger economies towards liberalising trade by defending multilateralism and ensuring strong international organisations.
- The EU-Singapore FTA will be the first bilateral trade agreement concluded between the EU and an ASEAN Member State. It is an important step towards the EU’s ultimate goal of a trade and investment agreement with ASEAN at the time where both sides are currently engaged in preparatory work towards agreeing on a possible resumption of talks.

3. **The trade deal puts great emphasis on sustainable development and will set a precedent for deals with other ASEAN member states:**

The FTA sets out strong legally-binding commitments on domestic levels of environmental and labour protections consistent with international standards and agreements, thereby emphasising that economic growth and sustainable development go hand in hand with each other. As the agreement will set a precedent for deals with other ASEAN member states, the EU and Singapore can lead by example for the rest of Southeast Asia thereby having a positive impact on the entire region in terms of protecting the environment and respecting human rights, and promoting fair and open trade.
The undersigned associations strongly believe that this EUSFTA will deliver economic growth, job creation and engagement on issues of sustainable development and would like to call on the European Council and the European Parliament to refrain from taking the EUSFTA hostage for institutional reasons, to the detriment of consumers and businesses on both sides.

SIGNATORIES

**European Chamber of Commerce (Singapore)**  
Established 10 years ago, the European Chamber of Commerce represents nearly 180 European companies operating in Singapore and the region of ASEA, counting among its members many of the world’s leading enterprises. A significant number of the EuroCham corporate members have their regional headquarter in Singapore.

**ADB Dutch Chamber of Commerce Singapore (ADB DutchCham)**  
ADB-DutchCham connects Dutch and Singaporean nationals and businesses with matching interests. The association aims to create and leverage business opportunities in Singapore and the region for its members, and promotes Dutch-Singaporean collaborations. It provides a platform for members to share cultural business values and showcase their particular (industry) skills, knowledge and expertise. To this end ADB-DutchCham organises business and social events that are led by its industry and social support committees.

**AHK Singaporean-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (SGC)**  
The Singaporean-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (SGC) is part of a network of 130 offices of the German bilateral Chambers of Industry and Commerce abroad in 90 countries. The Chamber is one of the largest national Business Chambers in Singapore with a membership of close to 550 representatives from a variety of industries from Germany and Singapore. The SGC is a valuable and well established networking platform and well connected with authorities in Singapore and Germany. Through its active industry committees SGC gives a voice to businesses. With its distinct service unit and trade fairs arms - DEinternational and Fairs & More respectively - the SGC builds a primary source for receiving reliable information on the German and Singapore business environment as well as bilateral trade relations. DEinternational serves clients in their business needs e.g. searching for business partners, organizing business missions and business trips, finding staff members and providing market analysis. DEinternational has worked in many areas such as Energy Efficiency, education, Industrie 4.0, finance, research and many more. Moreover, the SGC fulfils public obligations on behalf of the German Federal Government.
Austrian Business Association (ABA)

Austrian Business Association (ABA) is an association of Austrian companies, businessmen and Austrian citizens as well as friends and supporters of Austrian business in Singapore. ABA is dedicated to promote and support the business of Austrian companies in Singapore and is a registered association with elected committee members. Members will have access to a variety of activities beneficial to the development of their company in Singapore business environment. Regular meetings give members the opportunity to present their company to the Austrian Business Community providing a communication platform creating and enhancing personal contacts. ABA provides an ideal symbiosis between Austrian business and Austrian culture.

Belgium-Luxembourg Business Group (BLBG)

BLBG, the Belgium Luxembourg Business Group in Singapore, supports Belgian and Luxembourg businesses and professionals in Singapore. Our goal is to expand business opportunities between those parties and develop business relations with local and regional actors. We focus on exchanging information and best practices on how to do business in Singapore and Asia as well as improve Belgian and Luxembourg export opportunities. We also represent the interests of the Belgian/Luxembourg business community in Singapore, both companies as well as individuals and offer a wide range of networking opportunities.

British Chamber of Commerce Singapore (BritCham)

The British Chamber of Commerce Singapore (BritCham Singapore) is a membership organisation which consists of a dynamic business community of over 3,500 executives, representing around 400 companies. Members are made up of British, Singaporean, international companies and individuals alike. We provide our members connections and support for businesses and organise events, offering frequent and diverse opportunities for networking and exchange. The Chamber also provides trade support services and assistance to British companies looking to set-up and do business in Singapore.

Bulgaria-Singapore Partnership Alliance (BSIP LLP)

BSIP Alliance is a socially focused entity, set up with the aim to strengthen the bilateral business and socio-cultural relations between Bulgaria and Singapore.
Danish Business Association of Singapore (DABS)
The Danish Business Association of Singapore (DABS), initiated by the Royal Danish Embassy and established in the autumn of 1983 by a group of dynamic Danish businessmen, was officially registered on 27 January 1984. DABS targets corporate companies in Singapore with a Danish link.

French Chamber of Commerce in Singapore (FCCS)
Established in 1979, the French Chamber of Commerce in Singapore belongs to a worldwide network of 120 French Chambers (CCIFI) in 90 countries with over 33,000 companies. Our mission is to facilitate set-up and accelerate development of French companies in the local market, develop relations between our members and the Singapore business community, and encourage economic, commercial and investment relations between France and Singapore. We represent a dynamic business platform of 720 company members and a total network of 4,200 individual members, offering an extensive range of business services and giving access to people and information.

Irish Chamber of Commerce (Singapore)
The Irish Chamber of Commerce (Singapore) is a network of business professionals whose aim is to strengthen business connections in Singapore, and between Ireland and Singapore. The Chamber has an extensive reach and while there is a select committee focus on four core areas, people representing all sectors in Singapore are members of the Irish Chamber. These sectors include financial services and banking, medical, food, pharmaceuticals and life sciences, information communication technology and construction services.
Italian Chamber of Commerce in Singapore (ICCS)
The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Singapore (ICCS) is a non-profit association recognized by the Italian Government and is a member of Assocamerestero, the apex body of over 70 Italian Chambers abroad. The Chamber aims to strengthen bilateral relations between Italy and Singapore in coordination with strategic partners from the two countries.

Swedish Chamber of Commerce (Singapore)- SwedCham
The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, SwedCham, is a chamber of commerce representing Swedish businesses in Singapore. The majority of the chamber’s members are large multinational corporations. SwedCham is part of Team Sweden, joining the Swedish Embassy and Business Sweden in advocating Swedish business interests towards relevant stakeholders. SwedCham also offers an extensive range of networking and learning opportunities to its members.

SwissCham Singapore
Founded in 1988, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Singapore (SwissCham) fosters business ties and friendship between Swiss and Singaporean companies, which are dating back for soon 200 years. Formerly known as the Swiss Business Association (“SBA”), it acts as the spokesperson of Swiss business interests in Singapore towards Singaporean and Swiss authorities as well as other chambers and business groups, cultivating the Swiss networking culture in Singapore and the region.

amfori – Trade with Purpose
amfori is the association of European and international commerce that promotes the values of free and sustainable trade. It brings together over 2,200 retailers, importers, brand companies, and national associations, to improve the political and legal framework for trade in a sustainable way. Our members come from 45 countries and represent over €1.7 trillion in combined annual turnover.
www.amfori.org

CC: Mrs Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Trade