



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**STATEMENT**

Washington, 17 February 2014

**Welcoming Remarks by EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht at the Outset of Stocktaking Meetings with United States Trade Representative Ambassador Michael Froman on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement**

Thank you very much Mike for this warm welcome, although it's kind of cold in Washington. Let me again thank you very much for this opportunity today and tomorrow to discuss in-depth about the political steering and taking stock of where we are after three rounds of successful discussions.

We are starting to identify where the difficulties are, where the opportunities are, and what road forward we should take. We are making steady progress. I would say more steady progress than we normally have in a trade negotiation, which is never easy.

And the main reason for that is, of course, that we know each other very well. Our economies know each other very well. The trade between the European Union and the United States is the highway of trade worldwide. There are very few companies of a certain size that are not active on both sides of the Atlantic. We know what it is about, and that is why we also realize, I believe, that we have to make this big step forward and this is a unique opportunity to do so.

And with due respect for our health and safety regulations, for our consumer protection, that's not what we are going to negotiate about. What we are trying to do is - within the already very modern framework we enjoy both in the United States and in Europe - work together to make sure that we can continue to play a leading role in world markets about norms and standard setting - not in a 'closed shop'manner, but in an open way.

What we are trying to do is make sure that we create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. What we are aiming for is to have even more foreign direct investment than we already have and vice versa.

In fact, what we are trying to do is to make progress together among not only our economies, but also our societies that have a lot in common. It doesn't mean that Europe is exactly the same as the United States, but on the other hand, I cannot find a country or a group of countries that are closer to Europe than you are. Of course negotiating between friends is not always easy. So we also start realizing that yes, we also face a number of challenges.

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We are both realizing that we have to overcome them together; that we will have to find not only a balanced deal, but also a deal that is ambitious. And yes that will necessitate, I believe, a number of not always very easy discussions, but that's in the end what we are paid for. So we will try to do it.

And today and tomorrow is the "kick-off" of the political process that should steer this very important trade and investment negotiation.

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