

Joint statement by Catherine Ashton and US Trade Representative Ron Kirk on bilateral trade issues - Washington DC, 13 July 2009

United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk and European Union Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton met in Washington, D.C. to discuss bilateral trade relations. Building on the successful conclusion of an agreement on the long-standing beef hormone dispute on May 13, both sides agreed to intensify their bilateral engagement in order to find solutions that will bring meaningful economic benefits to workers, consumers, and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic. USTR Kirk and Commissioner Ashton issued the following statement:

At our first meeting in March, we pledged to redouble our efforts to resolve bilateral trade disagreements, some of which we have been discussing for many years. Through intensified bilateral engagement, we believe we can find solutions that bring meaningful economic benefits to stakeholders on both sides. We instructed our negotiators to identify and exploit new opportunities for market-opening and economic integration.

Two months ago we registered our first success under this effort to intensify bilateral engagement: the May U.S.-EU Memorandum of Understanding relating to the beef hormones dispute, which underscored that even disagreements that have persisted for many years can sometimes be set on a course towards resolution through pragmatic, problem-solving approaches.

In our meeting we discussed potential ways forward on several other bilateral issues on which we are prepared to intensify our engagement in the coming weeks and months.

- We discussed steps that the United States and the EU could take to facilitate the lifting of EU emergency measures, last modified in 2008, requiring that all U.S. shipments of long-grain rice be tested prior to entering the EU for the trace presence of a biotech rice product approved in the United States but not approved in the EU. Discussions on this issue among European Commission and U.S. government agriculture and trade experts will continue in the coming weeks.
- We exchanged ideas on potential steps to address the WTO dispute on Section 110(5) of the U.S. Copyright Act (the so-called "Irish music" dispute), which relates to music licensing. We directed our staffs to explore new options on this dispute in the coming weeks.
- We agreed to initiate a practical dialogue on the trade implications of chemicals regulation in the United States and the EU. We directed our staffs to discuss the substantive agenda and format for this dialogue in the coming weeks.
- We discussed the European Commission Trade Barrier Regulation Report on online gambling and its implications for the WTO rights and obligations of the parties concerned.

We also discussed the continuing efforts of the EU and other WTO members to reach agreement on the terms of the EU's importation regime for bananas. We share an interest in resolving longstanding disputes on banana trade on terms acceptable to all concerned parties, and will work with all parties to this end.

We plan to monitor each of these issues closely, and we look forward to reviewing progress in addressing them in September. Our discussion also touched upon how better to cooperate in preventing disputes and on preparations for the fall meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Council.