

Transatlantic Economic Council

EU-U.S. Expert Workshop on Raw Material Flows & Data Public summary document

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On November 29, 2011, the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), represented by co-chairs Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht, agreed to a Raw Materials Work Plan, which includes preparation of a joint inventory of mineral raw materials data and analysis maintained by both sides. As part of this effort, the two sides were instructed to consider the results of ongoing European Commission and United States Government studies of raw materials resource availability, trade flows, and criticality and of other supply and demand analyses, such as the 2010 European Commission Report by an ad-hoc expert group on critical raw materials and the U.S. Department of Energy Critical Materials Strategy.

In line with the TEC recommendations, a EU-U.S. Expert Workshop on Mineral Raw Material Flows & Data was held in Brussels on 12 and 13 September 2012. Participants of the Expert Workshop discussed how the European Union and the United States will explore steps to create a joint raw materials data inventory and other means to share raw materials data in the context of current policies on both sides to enable reliable and diverse raw materials supplies.

In terms of moving from broad policy statements to discussing potential concrete deliverables, expert participants at the workshop discussed further co-operation and joint action in three areas. Some preliminary conclusions can be found below. Based on discussions by experts at the workshop, specific recommendations for further action and joint work in each of these areas, will be made to TEC leadership at the annual cabinet-level meeting scheduled for late 2012.

Methodology to Collect Data of Critical/Strategic Raw Materials

In the United States and the European Union, extensive methodologies for identifying critical raw materials have been developed over recent years. Moreover, as criticality is a dynamic concept, the European Commission will review its list of materials every three years, with the next review starting in late 2012. The U.S. Department of Energy will also continue to undertake periodic reviews of materials required for energy technologies. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce will likely continue to examine viewpoints from consumers of critical and strategic materials and other stakeholders and to identify and address potential industry supply-chain vulnerabilities and opportunities.

Participants of the workshop discussed how the concept of criticality is context specific. What is critical for a specific manufacturer or product may not be critical for another, what is critical for

a State may not be critical for a country; and what is critical for national security may be different than what is necessary to make a television brighter or less expensive.

Workshop participants compared methodologies used to determine criticality and discussed how together the United States and the EU could develop an approach to harmonize and/or standardize collected data as well as to identify and prioritize how to address data gaps. Such a joint approach would support efforts on both sides to develop a more complete picture of raw materials currently available, and support policy discussions both domestically and multilaterally promoting a sustainable supply of raw materials.

Collecting, Sharing and Disseminating Data and Geological Knowledge

The United States and European Union Member States possess considerable statistical data on mineral deposits. In the United States, the focus of collection, analysis, and dissemination of data and information on domestic and international minerals production, consumption, and materials flow is documented by the U.S. Geological Survey (www.usgs.gov). This full spectrum of mineral resource science allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complete life cycle of mineral resources and materials – resource formation, discovery, production, consumption, use, recycling, and reuse – and allows for an understanding of environmental issues of concern throughout the life cycle.

Participants at the workshop discussed approaches to collect, structure, and share/disseminate data on both sides, and how these approaches relate to those of other countries and potential development of global standards. To facilitate this work, the European Commission will launch a study on statistical information on EU raw materials deposits by the end of 2012.

EU-U.S. Co-operation on Eco-Design, Recycling, & Substitution

Participants discussed how better knowledge of material flows through the product and waste stages of the raw materials supply chain could help efforts on both sides to support a lifecycle approach to materials management, and how approaches to design, recycling, and substitution can add to sustainability of supply of raw materials. Participants discussed how work in this area could complement outputs from the ongoing trilateral EU-U.S.-Japan research cooperation on raw materials, with the next meeting taking place in the first half of 2013 in Brussels, and ongoing work within the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Business views on Electronics Materials Management and their recommendations for further government actions will be discussed at a TEC Transatlantic Business Dialogue-sponsored conference on October 4, 2012, in Washington, D.C. On this subject, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently published a report entitled "Rare Earth Elements: A Review of Production, Processing, Recycling, and Associated Environmental Issues", which could inform this work (<http://nepis.epa.gov/Adobe/PDF/P100EUBC.pdf>).