

Joint Report

The first meeting of the European Union– New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) was hosted by the EU in an in-person format on Tuesday 6 May 2025, in Brussels.

The Parties recognised that the TSD chapter of the EU-New Zealand FTA set a new benchmark for enhancing sustainable development through their trade and investment relationships – by providing high-level provisions for environment protection, climate change, labour rights and gender equality.

Officials from the EU and New Zealand provided an update on their respective domestic and international policy developments related to trade and environment, climate change, labour, gender and due diligence. The Parties discussed policy areas of mutual interest and areas for future cooperation to advance sustainable development initiatives under the FTA, including in international and multilateral fora.

Trade and environment and trade and climate action policy developments

The Parties provided an update on their respective policy developments in these areas, including on their ongoing participation in regional climate initiatives, including in the Pacific, and multilateral fora.

The Parties discussed the implementation of the Paris Agreement and exchanged on their respective nationally determined contributions, and agreed to continue this engagement, while looking forward to further discuss this and other climate policy related issues at the next EU-New Zealand High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change.

The Parties agreed to engage in further cooperation in international fora. In this regard, the EU recalled the invitation to New Zealand to participate in the Global Energy Transitions Forum.

The Parties also shared their respective policy developments across a range of issues, including the transition to renewable energy, renewable hydrogen certification, decarbonisation of shipping, reforms on sustainable finance, and climate adaptation, conservation and restoration of nature, circular economy, and biodiversity.

New Zealand presented its comprehensive efforts to measure and mitigate agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including methane. In that regard, Parties signalled ongoing cooperation at the OECD on harmonising methodologies to measure GHG emissions and to further pursue this dialogue under the guidance of the Sustainable Food Committee.

With regard to trade and sustainable forest management, the EU provided an update on the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation, and New Zealand raised its concerns with the Regulation's potential impact on trade. Noting their shared objective

to combat deforestation and forest degradation globally and the opportunities for continued collaboration under the Agreement, EU and New Zealand undertook to engage further in this area. The Committee acknowledged its role to assist within its remit in working through issues that may arise, including in relation to EUDR implementation.

The Parties discussed avenues for developing bilateral cooperation and exchanges of best practices on investments and how to leverage finance for climate adaptation and resilience; the development of green shipping corridors; green hydrogen; fisheries and aquaculture; the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and on maintaining regular engagement on the implementation of trade-related aspects of the European Green Deal such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, as well as to update each other on relevant circular economy legislation such as the Ecodesign for sustainable product regulation.

Trade and labour

The Parties discussed ongoing work on their respective decent work initiatives, and work relating to International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the fundamental conventions on occupational safety and health (C155 and C187), recent ratifications by EU Member States, and New Zealand's roadmaps towards ratification of ILO Conventions No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and No. 138 on Minimum Age. The EU and New Zealand noted that one case from New Zealand and three cases regarding EU Member States were included on the preliminary list of cases as submitted by the social partners for the International Labour Conference's Committee on the Application of Standards and agreed this may be an area for further discussion following developments at the 2025 International Labour Conference (ILC) in relation to these cases.

The Parties discussed the state of play regarding the update of the TSD chapter as provided in the FTA in relation to the International Labour Conference including, in 2022, a safe and healthy working environment to the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work.

The Parties shared information on the latest labour market and social developments, including on employment with a focus on youth and women, wages, risk of poverty or social exclusion, skills and labour shortages.

The EU presented its recently adopted Union of Skills and informed about ongoing work on upcoming initiatives, namely the EU antipoverty strategy and quality jobs roadmap. New Zealand presented on its Employment Action Plan and New Zealand's Holidays Act.

The Parties committed to information sharing and cooperation by connecting subject matter experts, which may include topics of paid leave, occupational safety and health or skills. A first expert exchange was scheduled for 8 May to discuss EU and New Zealand's approaches to workplace safety with focus on most critical risks and promoting compliance, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises.

Trade and Gender Equality

The EU and New Zealand shared their recent achievements and progress in advancing gender-related trade issues, including their efforts at the WTO and, for New Zealand, through the Global Trade and Gender Arrangement (GTAGA).

The Parties shared their approaches to assessing trade agreements with an inclusive lens and gender-based analysis. Through this discussion the Parties noted the impact of trade on women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The Parties shared their approaches to reducing the gender pay gap, such as through legislative approaches and voluntary reporting. The EU presented its Roadmap for Women's Rights with a focus on economic aspects. The Parties underscored the need for continued collaboration to make trade more inclusive and expressed their eagerness to continue working together to foster inclusivity in trade.

Cooperation in other forums

In addition to the areas mentioned, the EU and New Zealand agreed to further engage in multilateral forums on matters of mutual interest, including on responsible business conduct, notably in the OECD, the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under the Convention of Biodiversity (CBD), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution.

Conclusion and next steps

The Co-chairs reiterated the areas of cooperation agreed in the TSD Committee. The Parties acknowledged that the discussion during the committee was broad and substantive, and progressed in a number of areas of mutual interest related to climate change, environment, labour, and gender.

The Parties agreed to maintaining the high standard of discussion and the cooperative nature to reinforce the value and importance of the TSD chapter to both parties. The EU and New Zealand agreed to take a nimble approach to implementation.

The Parties agreed that the next TSD Committee would be held in one year, and it would take into account TSD-relevant aspects from the first meeting of the Domestic Advisory Group in both the EU and New Zealand.

Participants

European Union

European Commission (EC) Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security
EC Directorate-General for Environment
EC Directorate-General for Climate Action
EC Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand

New Zealand

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Ministry for the Environment
Ministry for Primary Industries
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
New Zealand Treasury