

Minutes of the New Zealand – European Union Free Trade Agreement Inaugural Trade Committee 25 October 2025

Agenda item 1 Opening Remarks

- Minister McClay opened the inaugural Trade Committee by welcoming the Commissioner and his delegation to Queenstown, New Zealand on 25 October.
- Commissioner Šefčovič and Minister McClay underscored the importance of the European Union (EU) and New Zealand cooperating as reliable and trusted partners, in the current geopolitical and geo-economic context.
- Both sides stressed that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) offers vital predictability and certainty for trade and investment.
- They welcomed the smooth implementation of the FTA so far and noted the positive developments of the EU-New Zealand trade relationship, with an 8% increase since entry into force of the Agreement.
- They underscored the importance of ensuring the FTA continues to be properly implemented including through growing government to government and business to business cooperation.
- Minister McClay and Commissioner Šefčovič acknowledged the work of the various specialised committees leading up to the Trade Committee. They welcomed the EU–NZ Business Summit in Auckland, New Zealand on 23–24 October for spotlighting new opportunities in trade, investment, and shared innovation, and for deepening business links.
- Both sides welcomed the work towards an EU-CPTPP dialogue.
- Minister McClay and Commissioner Šefčovič stressed the importance of supporting the World Trade Organisation (WTO), including joint engagements at the 14th Ministerial Conference of the WTO (MC14).

Agenda item 2 Adoption of the Agenda

- The proposed agenda was agreed by both FTA parties.

Agenda item 3.1 Progress under the FTA

- Minister McClay and Commissioner Šefčovič expressed appreciation for the work on trade promotion done in the EU and in New Zealand and supported further efforts.

Business Delegation

- Commissioner Šefčovič and Minister McClay discussed a potential Business Delegation to the EU in 2026, with potentially targeted focus on specific EU Member States and/or specific sectors.

Customs

- Commissioner Šefčovič noted the work underway to digitise the Customs Union.
- Minister McClay shared New Zealand's experience on low value parcels.

Agenda item 3.2 Matters Arising from Specialised Committees

Critical Raw Materials

- The EU noted that the work and initiatives underway in the EU on Critical Raw Materials as an area of priority. Ministers expressed interest for exploring potential cooperation in this space, possibly focusing on one or two projects.
- New Zealand noted they had accepted South Korea's invitation to join the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) of which the EU is a member.

Tariff Rate Quota (TRQs)

- New Zealand noted issues with the administration of TRQs and reported cases where there was a delay in returning unused import licences which prevented them being used within the quota period. The EU took good note and requested that New Zealand shares additional details to allow the EU to look into this further.

Wine and Spirits

- New Zealand raised concerns around the inconsistent implementation of the labelling regulation (**2021/2117**) and lack of transitional measures. New Zealand made the case that its wine was compliant with the regulation but was being refused from some EU markets. The EU requested New Zealand to provide specific examples to allow the EU to look into this further.

EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)

- New Zealand and the EU confirmed they share the same objective to combat global deforestation and forest degradation and that the FTA contains important sustainable forestry-related provisions in this regard.
- However, New Zealand reiterated its concerns with the implementation of the EUDR and again advocated for a system where a group of countries (including New Zealand) have appropriately reduced compliance requirements owing to their low risk of deforestation.
- The EU took note of New Zealand's concerns and referred to its current regulatory simplification agenda
- The EU noted that its current Information Technology systems could not actually cope with the data it was requesting under EUDR; the Commission had recently made a proposal to amend the timelines of application.
- New Zealand emphasised its concerns that the amendments proposed in October 2025 to simplify EUDR would not help New Zealand exporters.
- New Zealand and the EU reiterated their commitment to continue engaging in constructive discussions on trade and forests, including on matters within the remit of the FTA.

Geographical Indications (GI)

- New Zealand noted it was implementing its GI legislation. All of the EU's Geographical Indications (GIs) listed under the FTA were now protected under New Zealand law, some have a phase in period.

Agenda item 3.3 Steel Safeguards

- The EU explained the Commission's proposal on Steel Safeguards to protect domestic steel production. The Commissioner noted that the EU currently receives five times its annual consumption. Despite New Zealand not exporting a lot of steel to the EU, Minister McClay wished to register concerns with the proposed safeguards as matter of principle, recalling the FTA and the WTO context. The Commissioner confirmed that the EU would work within the WTO's rules and the FTA.

Agenda item 3.4 Take stock of the work of the Domestic Advisory Group (DAG)

- New Zealand noted the New Zealand DAG had been established and had met three times over the past year. The EU noted that the EU's DAG would hold its first meeting this year (2025). The Trade Committee noted that a joint meeting between the DAGs would be useful to exchange ideas.

Agenda item 4 Agreement of the Civil Society Forum Guidelines

- The Trade Committee agreed to the Civil Society Forum Guidelines.

Agenda item 5 ILO Health and Safety Amendment under the FTA Article 19.3

- New Zealand and the EU agreed to adopt a Trade Committee Decision to amend the Agreement to expand fundamental principles and rights at work to include occupational safety and health, in line with the decision by the International Labour Conference (ILO) in June 2022.

Agenda item 6 Appointment of Arbitrators

- New Zealand noted that this process was under way, and expected to have New Zealand's list to share with the EU in November.

Agenda item 7 Priority areas for future cooperation

- New Zealand shared its priorities for cooperation including digital identity, Māori trade, mutual recognition and non-tariff barriers.
- The EU also noted its priorities for cooperation including the space sector, clean tech, renewable energy and digital. The EU also noted the value of and impressive success of New Zealand as an associated country to pillar 2 of the Horizon Europe programme.
- The Minister and the Commissioner confirmed they would collaborate in the lead up to, at and beyond the 14th Ministerial Conference of the WTO (MC14) in support of the rules based multilateral trading system and the WTO. They also discussed the importance of holding another mini-ministerial on the margins of Davos (Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum) to ensure progress ahead of MC14.

Agenda item 8 Closing remarks

- Both sides acknowledged the productive and friendly atmosphere at the EU-New Zealand Business Summit and the Trade Committee. They welcomed the

close cooperation on the upcoming EU-CPTPP dialogue. The next EU-New Zealand Trade Committee meeting will be hosted by the EU.

Annex 1 – Trade Committee Agenda

First Trade Committee meeting of the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

Saturday 25 October 2025, Queenstown New Zealand

AGENDA

No.	Item	Lead	Time	Schedule
1.	Opening statements by Co-Chairs	NZ, EU	4-4mins	11:11-08am
2.	Adoption of the Trade Committee agenda	NZ	1min	11:08-11:09am
3.	Overview of the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement implementation			
3.1	Progress under the FTA	EU to open the item	5-5mins	11:09-11:19pm
3.2	Matters arising from the Specialised Committees	NZ to open the item	10 mins	11:19-11:29pm
3.3	Proposal for addressing the negative trade-related effects of global overcapacity on the European Union steel market	NZ to open	5 mins	11:29-11:34
3.4	Take stock of the work of the Domestic Advisory Groups	EU to open the item	2 mins	11:34-11:36am
4.	Agreement of the Civil Society Forum Guidelines (Article 24.7 of the Agreement)	NZ to open the item	2 mins	11:36-11:38am
5.	Adoption of the Trade Committee Decision N° 01 on the amendment concerning fundamental principles and rights at work (Article 19.3 of the Agreement)	EU to open the item	4 mins	11:38-11:42am
6.	Progress on the appointment of Arbitrators (Article 26.6 of the Agreement)	NZ to open the item	2 mins	11:42-11:44am
7.	Priority areas for forward looking cooperation forming part of a joint statement	NZ to open the item	6 mins	11:44-11:50am
8.	Closing statements by Co-Chairs	EU, NZ	2-2 mins	11:50-11:54
9.	Signing of the Decision of the Trade Committee	EU, NZ	6 mins	11:54-12:00

Annex 2 – FTA Amendment Decision Text

DECISION No 1/2025 OF THE TRADE COMMITTEE

of 25 October 2025

**amending Article 19.3(3) and (5) of the Free Trade Agreement
between the European Union and New Zealand
concerning amendment to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration
on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the inclusion of a safe
and healthy working environment in the ILO's framework
of fundamental principles and rights at work**

THE TRADE COMMITTEE,

Having regard to the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and New Zealand (the ‘Agreement’), and in particular Article 19.3(4) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The 110th International Labour Conference adopted on 10 June 2022 Resolution I on the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) framework of fundamental principles and rights at work.
- (2) Article 19.3(4) of the Agreement provides that the Trade Committee may, no later than at its first meeting, adopt a decision to amend Article 19.3(3) of the Agreement to reflect the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the fundamental principles and rights at work in accordance with Resolution I of the 110th International Labour Conference in June 2022.
- (3) Article 19.3(3) of the Agreement should therefore be amended by adding a safe and healthy working environment to the list of fundamental principles and rights at work. In addition, the reference to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Article 19.3(3) of the Agreement should be updated in order to align it with the most recent amendment to that Declaration.
- (4) Following the amendment to Article 19.3(3) of the Agreement, the statement in the footnote to Article 19.3(5) of the Agreement that all Member States have ratified the fundamental conventions of the ILO will become obsolete. It is therefore appropriate to delete that footnote,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Article 19.3(3) and (5) of the Agreement are amended as set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 2

The amendments set out in the Annex to this Decision shall enter into force on the first day of the sixth month following the month during which the Parties exchange written notifications certifying that they have completed their respective applicable legal requirements and procedures for entry into force of the amendments.

This Decision is drawn up in duplicate in the Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish languages, each text being equally authentic.

Done at Brussels and Wellington, ...

For the Trade Committee

The Co-Chairs

ANNEX

Article 19.3 of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and New Zealand (the ‘Agreement’) is amended as follows:

(1) paragraph 3 is amended as follows:

(a) the introductory wording is replaced by the following:

‘In accordance with the ILO Constitution and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted at Geneva on 18 June 1998 by the International Labour Conference at its 86th Session and its Follow-up, as amended at its 110th Session in 2022, each Party shall respect, promote and realise the principles concerning the fundamental rights at work which are the subject of the fundamental conventions of the ILO, namely:’;

(b) in point (c), after the words ‘the effective abolition of child labour;’, the word ‘and’ is deleted;

(c) in point (d), after the words ‘the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation’, the full stop is deleted and the following is added: ‘; and’;

(d) the following point is added:

‘(e) a safe and healthy working environment’;

(2) in paragraph 5, footnote 1 (‘The Parties note that all Member States have ratified the fundamental conventions of the ILO.’) is deleted.

Annex 3

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

under the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

These operational guidelines for the Civil Society Forum ("the Guidelines") provide a framework for the operation of the Civil Society Forum established under Article 24.7 of the EU-NZ Free Trade Agreement ("the FTA").

1. Participants

Each Party will apply its own rules and practices on the registration of participants in the Civil Society Forum to promote a balanced representation of civil society organisations established in its territory.

The participants will be able to attend the Civil Society Forum meeting in-person or by virtual means. The Parties may jointly decide to hold the meeting entirely virtually.

2. Timing and organisation

The Party hosting that year's Trade Committee will be responsible for organising and hosting the Civil Society Forum.

Officials from the host Party will provide the secretariat function and the host Party will bear expenses associated with hosting, including the venue and facilitating the meeting. The host Party will not be responsible for meeting any participants' costs. Where the Civil Society Forum is held in person, the host Party will be responsible for facilitating virtual participation as appropriate.

Where possible, the Civil Society Forum will be held at a time that enables involvement of participants from both New Zealand and the European Union.

3. Agenda and summaries

Each Party will endeavour to consult their respective Domestic Advisory Group on possible agenda items before the Parties finalise the draft agenda.

The agenda should include a presentation on the latest FTA implementation-related updates as well as an open discussion on the topics raised by the participants.

The Party hosting the Civil Society Forum will prepare a draft agenda. Once the agenda is finalised between the Parties, the Parties will endeavour to publish the agenda at least 15 days before the date of the Civil Society Forum meeting.

The host Party will draft a summary of the Civil Society Forum discussion in consultation with the other Party, within 30 days after the date of the Civil Society Forum meeting. The summary will be made publicly available.

The Parties will periodically review the Guidelines ahead of the Trade Committee being convened, and may decide to amend the Guidelines by agreement at the Trade Committee.