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European Commission

The President

Brussels, 22. 10. 2026

*Dear Presidents, Dear Director-Generals,*

*This has been a transformative year for European trade policy. In consistently challenging geopolitical and geoeconomic times, Europe has made a clear choice – to pursue European independence. On the path to independence, our ambitious and open trade agenda is a crucial element. We are strengthening relations across the world wide network of trade partners, forging reliable partnerships and diversifying supply chains. This network can now count 45 preferential trade agreements with 80 partners. The European Union has the largest such network in the world, and we will continue to expand it.*

*In 2026 alone we have not only signed our agreement with Mercosur, we also concluded negotiations with India, Indonesia and Australia, signed our modernised Global Agreement with Mexico, and reached a political agreement with the Philippines, just three years after we agreed to relaunch stalled negotiations. In addition to these deals, we have successfully pursued other forms of engagement, such as concluding the Clean Trade and Investment Partnership (CTIP) with South Africa and the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreements (SIFAs) with Angola, Cote d'Ivoire and Ecuador.*

*A number of these agreements will enter into application in the months ahead. I intend to sign our agreements with Indonesia and India before the end of this year, with Australia to follow shortly thereafter. Meanwhile, negotiations continue with Thailand, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates. Our aim is to successfully conclude these as soon as possible while we continue our engagement with other countries in the Gulf region to build strong and mutually beneficial economic partnerships.*

*Our recent summits with Mexico and India showed how powerful business-to-business exchanges can be: they turn political commitments into concrete deals and lasting connections. I intend to make such exchanges a regular feature of our summits, and I look forward to taking part whenever I can. At the end of this month, we will open a new chapter in our relationship with Canada, which we will use as a blueprint with other trading partners as we build an alliance for the future.*

*For the benefits of all these deals to reach businesses and citizens as quickly as possible, the Commission is doing everything it can to shorten the time between the political conclusion of any given agreement and its signature and entry into force. This is of the utmost importance for our competitiveness. In order to succeed, we must work hand in hand with European businesses to turn agreements into tangible results. That is why I am writing to you, with a proposal to increase our cooperation based on five points going forward.*

1. ***First, public support for trade agreements, especially new ones, is very important.*** *When agreements are concluded, it creates meaningful opportunities for European businesses, for instance by removing tariffs, saving billions in duties paid. Having the business community be vocal and make the case for it with employees, suppliers, national governments, parliaments and the wider public can make the world of difference in communicating the benefits and creating positive public opinion. There are many concrete examples of benefits - investments, exports, better access to important inputs, jobs and supply chain resilience. We should make the most of the focus and figures to show the real results of these deals.*

2. ***Second, increase the use of our agreements.*** *Our agreements create preferential access that many more companies can still tap into. A trade agreement is only a promise until it is used. Its true value translates into additional goods shipped, services supplied, contracts won, jobs created and supply chains made more resilient. Every preference put to use its value gained for Europe. I count on your support to help us look at the reasons why the potential remains untapped. Every year, we publish comprehensive data but we need your help in identifying the sectors and markets where utilisation is low, and work with us on targeted actions to remove obstacles, including through campaigns promoting the opportunities in the EU and in partner countries.*

3. ***Third, the benefits, the tools and the information must reach every company, especially SMEs.*** *Together with national and regional chambers, you are best placed to carry the message across all Member States. Through your networks you can also promote wider use of well-established tools such as Access2Markets and practical information on rules of origin. Large companies can also help their smaller suppliers and customers to make the best use of EU trade agreements. Chambers and federations could also nominate SME correspondents to engage in a regular dialogue with the Commission.*

4. ***Fourth, swift action on barriers.*** *Your members see problems first. When they report obstacles or potential trade barriers encountered in third countries, whether directly or through the Single Entry Point, the Commission will act quickly with our partners to avert or remove them and ensure commitments are respected. This includes, where necessary, taking decisive action under the dispute settlement provisions of trade agreements to ensure that the negotiated benefits are secured.*

5. ***Fifth, a regular high-level implementation dialogue.*** *I propose a dialogue that would allow us to take stock together at least once a year. The discussion would focus on how our agreements are being used and to what extent they deliver and what we can do to make further progress and increase the benefits. Each meeting should review a simple dashboard focusing on agreements applied: what works well or not so well, where the gaps are and what needs to be improved, including utilisation of tariff preferences, unresolved barriers, enforcement cases, SME uptake and priority markets for action.*

*Europe's openness is one of our greatest strengths. Our agreements give European companies a head start in the world's fastest-growing markets, but only if we use them, together. I would welcome your engagement with us as a central element to the success of our trade policy and our competitiveness drive. I look forward to hearing your views and to taking this partnership forward, alongside Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, who will lead this work on our side.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Ursula von der Leyen*

Electronically signed on 22/10/2026 14:41 (UTC+02) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121