

Press release

Brussels, 4th November 2016

**The FEDERATION OF BELGIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE and CANCHAM BELUX enthusiastically welcome the signing of CETA on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016. No one expects the opposition to stop but CANCHAM BELUX calls for this innovative and progressive treaty to be assessed during the upcoming ratification process according to its own merits and to its specific features.**

The members of the FEDERATION OF BELGIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE and CANCHAM BELUX in particular have been concerned with the recent events related to the signing of CETA by the Belgian State.

Without taking position on the process that finally led to an agreement being reached between the Belgian Federal government and the Belgian federated entities, CANCHAM BELUX would like to shed some light on this modern treaty and to state what its expectations are for what lies ahead.

Over the past years, CANCHAM BELUX has organized a series of events, both alone and in cooperation with other public and private institutions, to highlight the value, the meaning and the precise scope of this next-generation treaty. And it will continue to do so.

The FEDERATION OF BELGIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE and CANCHAM BELUX recognise that our economies produce more than they consume and that our level of affluence, welfare and social protection cannot be maintained without developing new markets and concluding new free-trade agreements. Unfortunately, given the current trend to 'take back control', free-trade agreements no longer seem to have a very good reputation. Indeed, due to the economic crisis, they often appear more as a cause for misery than of one of hope and benefits. However, CANCHAM BELUX believes that the conclusion of free-trade agreements, and in particular the conclusion of a modern agreement such as CETA, will undoubtedly contribute to a better control of globalization and to a reduction of its potential negative effects.

**CETA will not affect the right of the EU and of its Member States to continue to regulate** within the limits of their respective competences **and to continue to refuse the import of goods or services that do not comply with their standards and regulations.** The treaty clearly states this. The objective is to aim to harmonize rules and regulations as much as possible, but this **will in no way affect the**

**sovereignty of the parties on both sides of the Atlantic.** Moreover, **safety clauses** will continue to apply in sectors such as health, safety and the environment, and in the event of negative impact in certain sectors of the economy or in case of serious alterations in the economic situation of a given region or area.

Canada is a very important and substantial economic partner for Europe, Belgium and its federated entities. As a long-term friend, it shares the same democratic values and has been very committed over the years to uphold those values.

The FEDERATION OF BELGIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE and CANCHAM BELUX are convinced that **CETA will be beneficial to both the EU and Canada** and will continue to promote its merits and share its insights until and beyond the ratification of the treaty.

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