Chairman Moreira,

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the International Trade Committee today. In particular it gives me the opportunity to record the Irish Presidency’s positive experience in working with you, Professor Moreira, and your Committee, over the course of the past 6 months of the Irish Presidency. The results of our joint efforts to shape trade policy will no doubt deliver benefits for European society as a whole.

The Irish Presidency’s theme of Stability, Jobs and Growth reflects the challenges of our time. In pursuing this theme, and with full conviction of the powerful engine that trade is for growth and job creation, the Irish Presidency has attached great priority to advancing this agenda.
The benefit to the EU economy from all potential FTAs is estimated at about 2 million jobs. Realising those trade related jobs would be a significant contribution to tackling one of the biggest social challenges facing us today. Top of the Presidency agenda has been to move forward with new market access opportunities through free trade agreements. This would enable EU business to do more in diverse corners of the globe, and in doing so, to create jobs and economic growth.

In January, when I presented the priorities of the Irish Presidency, I pledged to deliver the message that Europe is open to business and open for business. Coming to the conclusion of our Presidency, I can say that this message has been a consistent and constant one.

**EU-US TTIP**

In January, I spoke about the sense that although the transatlantic market place was already deeply integrated, we could do more and the opportunity to send a strong signal to our global trading partners that both economies are prepared to push ahead with extending and opening markets rather than protecting them. The opportunities from a transformational deal that would bring about a transatlantic free trade area are too significant to ignore. We need to grasp them immediately.

In that context, the primary goal of the Irish Presidency in Trade was to advance the recommendations of the High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth and work towards agreement for a new generation Trade and Investment Agreement between the EU and the US. The High Level Working Group assessed all options to strengthen the EU-US trade and investment relationship, especially those areas with the highest potential to support jobs and growth. The Group concluded that a comprehensive agreement addressing a broad range of bilateral trade and investment issues, including regulatory issues, and contributing to the development of global rules, would provide the most significant mutual benefit.
Obama endorsed the launch of free trade talks with the European Union in his State of the Union address on 9 February 2013. This was followed a few days later by the Joint Launch with Commissioner De Gucht of the High Level Group Report.

I recall my appearance here in January when I reiterated my previously conveyed invitation to your Chairman, Professor Moreira, to attend the informal Trade Council in Dublin in April and I was delighted that you accepted. Ireland was the first country, since the Lisbon Treaty, to hold an informal meeting of Trade Ministers during its Presidency. I believe that the event provided a good opportunity for open discussion on all the opportunities and indeed challenges that such an ambitious project will present.

It was the Presidency’s strong intention to have the negotiating mandate approved by the Trade Council on 14th June and I am delighted to say that this was achieved last Friday. It is truly momentous that we have managed to bring a bold concept this far and achieve common agreement for a game changing transatlantic economic agreement. This is a critical first step in the process that will eventually lead to the realisation of those opportunities. Timely agreement of the mandate also demonstrates to our global partners that the EU is serious about trade and can act quickly and effectively.

An ambitious and comprehensive Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership could bring significant economic gains as a whole for the EU – estimated at €119 billion euros a year - and for the US around €95 billion euros a year once the agreement is fully implemented. This translates to an extra - on average - €545 euros in disposable income each year for a family of 4 in the EU. These are gains that are too significant to ignore. The European Parliament’s resolution on trade and investment negotiations with the United States also recognises this.
I think we are all agreed that it is now of paramount importance to begin the negotiations as quickly as possible with the aim of concluding those negotiations in the shortest possible time.

I also want to confirm to you that the mandate given to the Commission last Friday is broad based and comprehensive giving our negotiators the widest scope to achieve the best deal for Europe. The mandate furthermore confirms the importance we attach to EU values, consumer protection, the environment and labour standards.

**CETA**

The EU is also on the verge of completing another historic agreement, a Comprehensive, Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada. These negotiations have been complex, but anything worthwhile is seldom straightforward.

**Thailand, Vietnam**

Under the Irish Presidency, the Council adopted the mandate for EU negotiations with Thailand and we have seen the start of those negotiations. We have also seen good progress in negotiations with Vietnam. The ASEAN region is very important for EU Business. These countries are interlinked with key parts of global value chains and furthermore confirm and advance our trade agenda in growth markets.

**Japan**

During the Irish Presidency, the EU has sought to deepen and strengthen trade relationships with other economies of global significance. Negotiations have started on a Free Trade Agreement and an Investment Protection Agreement with Japan. Significantly, the first round of negotiations took place in April with the 2nd round set for next week in Tokyo.

**China**
The EU has continued to develop relationships with important strategic partners and to seek new market opportunities in growth areas, while we have moved to protect the EU’s interest in other areas. The Commission has recently submitted to the Council a recommendation for negotiating directives for an Investment Agreement with China. This marks an important development in the EU's relationship with its second most important trading partner. Last Friday, the Council held a very useful discussion concerning the EU’s trade and investment relationship with China, which should guide us in pursuing the EU's interests.

**EU-Columbia/Peru**

The EU has also decided to provisionally apply the Free Trade Agreements with Peru and Columbia. The provisional application of the agreement with Peru started on 1 March 2013, with Columbia expected to follow later this year. Once fully implemented, the Agreement will open up export opportunities for key EU industries and eliminate tariffs on all industrial and fisheries products, increase market access for agricultural products, improve access to public procurement, services and investment markets, further reduce technical barriers to trade, and establish common disciplines including on intellectual property rights, transparency and competition.

These two agreements demonstrate the EU's commitment to the region and the further development of our trade and investment relationship with South America.

**Eastern Neighbourhood**

Our Neighbourhood Policy is an important tool to create the condition to expand prosperity in our closest neighbours. Trade negotiations with Moldova were concluded last week. Georgia and Armenia are progressing well.

**Southern Neighbourhood**
The start of negotiations with Morocco is symbolic of a new dynamic and supportive relationship with our Southern Neighbours.

**WTO – Multilateral Agenda & MC9**

The multilateral trading system continues to be the cornerstone of EU trade policy and the essential rule maker for international trade. Later this year, the WTO Ministerial Conference will focus on key development issues such as Trade Facilitation and a package of measures that will benefit Least Developed Countries. This Ministerial will be a significant milestone on the path to an eventual resolution of the Doha Round. The Council will continue to refine its position in the lead up to MC9.

**Trade in Services Agreement**

When I spoke here in January, I made a commitment that the Irish Presidency would prioritise work to achieve an agreement on a mandate for a Trade in Services Agreement negotiations in Geneva. We achieved this. Formal negotiations are well underway now in Geneva, and I am happy to see that the EU is playing a proactive role in shaping the future Agreement.

**WTO DG**

One of the tasks that fell to the Irish Presidency was facilitating the choice of a single EU preference in the selection process for the Director General of the World Trade Organisation. This was a first for the EU. Such an important milestone was perceived in Geneva as a sign of EU unity. The continuation of that unity of approach from the EU can only serve to
enhance our influence at the World Trade Organisation. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and to welcome the incoming Director General of the WTO, Ambassador Roberto Azevedo. I have every confidence that Ambassador Azevedo can make an immediate positive contribution to preparations for the 9th Ministerial Conference and to the longer term challenges facing the WTO.

Legislative Files

We have a shared interest and responsibility to ensure that the EU’s trade policy contributes to economic growth and supports jobs. In that context, the Irish Presidency has prioritised the progress of a number of mutually important legislative files.

Omnibus I & II

The Omnibus I & II proposals aim to align decision-making procedures into line with those introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. When I spoke to you in January, I expressed the intention of the Presidency to accelerate progress on these and achieve agreement under the Irish Presidency. I am very happy that the European Parliament and the Council managed to find agreement earlier this month on these two important files, and I give due acknowledgement to the groundwork put in by previous Presidencies, and to all of the hard work of the officials of the three Institutions in getting to this outcome.

Market Access Regulation

I am equally happy that, in working to support the long term development of those countries most in need of support, the European Parliament and Council agreed on a compromise on the Market Access Regulation in March, which was endorsed by the Council and the European Parliament in May. The Market Access Regulation will come into force on 1 October 2014.
Financial Responsibility Regulation and Other Legislative Files

The Presidency had an intensive schedule of Council working group discussions on a number of other important pieces of legislation, namely, the Financial Responsibility Regulation, where work is now far advanced and Council should be in a position, under the Lithuanian Presidency, to engage with the European Parliament with a view to working towards a Financial Responsibility agreement; the Trade Defence Modernisation package of proposals and the 3rd country procurement proposal, all of which are being progressed.

Myanmar – Burma

This month the Parliament gave its approval for the reinstatement of Myanmar-Burma to GSP supporting the Council’s position. This measure is politically significant and confirms the EUs commitment to supporting development in Myanmar-Burma.

Closing

In conclusion, I again take the opportunity to thank Professor Moreira, the INTA Committee and the European Parliament. Together, we have made substantial progress across a broad range of important Trade Policy areas. In particular, I believe the agreement on a mandate for the opening of negotiations with the United States on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is a landmark achievement that will provide the platform to exploit the transatlantic relationship for the benefit of all European citizens.

Finally, it only remains of me to warmly welcome the incoming Lithuanian Presidency. I am fully confident that Lithuania can provide the continuity that is required to begin negotiations with the United States. I wish them well and look forward to working more closely with Minister Linkevicius.

ENDS