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European Services Forum welcomes the Commission Communication on Trade Policy

The European Services Forum (ESF), representing the interests of the European service sectors in international trade and investment negotiations, welcomes the Commission Communication on Trade Policy Review that was published today.

“Today’s announcement is setting the basis for a revised Trade Policy that takes many aspects of the comments made extensively by the European services Forum¹ in the past two years” said ESF Chairman Noel Clehane. “We welcome in particular the strong focus on services and digital trade”.

ESF is a strong defender of the multilateral trading system and supports the EU to work with all WTO members to initiate the necessary reforms to bring the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism back into full operation, and to revitalise the WTO negotiating function, so as to deliver disciplines in Domestic regulation for services, and more importantly an agreement on WTO rules on E-Commerce, as a digital trade rulebook is needed to allow European digital and ICT services to thrive and to set high standards that can guarantee trust and safety. ESF can of course only endorse efforts to negotiate WTO plurilateral talks on services.

Regarding the concept of “open strategic autonomy”, ESF believes that the EU resilience lies in keeping world markets open with fair and non-discriminatory conditions. ESF urges the EU to ratify and implement the agreements that are pending and calls for the conclusion of advanced and deep FTAs under negotiation with developed and emerging countries.

But foreign investors and exporters must abide by EU rules and principles, including respecting labour and environmental conventions toward a sustainable development. ESF takes note of the various tools that the Review highlights.

“The implementation and enforcement of these new tools will have to be managed in a careful and balanced way so as to not put into question the level of openness of the European Union” said Chairman Clehane.

END

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¹ [ESF Recommendations for incoming European Parliament and Commission related to the future EU Trade Policy – 24 May 2019](#); [ESF Recommendations to the European Commission on new EU Trade Policy – 29 April 2020](#); [ESF Contribution to Commission's Trade Policy Review – 14 September 2020](#)