

Government Trade Forum
Minutes of meeting of 26/02/2025

In attendance:

Government Ministers

- Simon Harris, *Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade* (chair)
- Martin Heydon, *Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine*
- James Lawless, *Minister for Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science*
- Niamh Smyth, *Minister of State at Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*

Department Officials

- Joe Hackett, Colm Hayes and Robert O'Driscoll, *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*
- Brendan Gleeson, *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*
- Declan Hughes, Ronnie Downes, Stephen Curran, *Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*
- John McCarthy, *Department of Finance*
- David Keating, *Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science*
- Stephen Kinsella, Conor Glynn, *Office of the Tánaiste*

State Agencies

- Jim O'Toole, *Bord Bia*
- Kevin Sherry, *Enterprise Ireland*
- Michael Lohan, *IDA Ireland* (online)
- Dr. Ciarán Seoighe, *Research Ireland*
- Aidan Power, *Tourism Ireland*

Business Representative Groups

- Danny McCoy, Pat Ivory, *Ibec*
- Ian Talbot, *Chambers Ireland*
- Paul Sweetman, *American Chamber of Commerce Ireland*
- Simon McKeeever, *Irish Exporters Association* (online)
- Neil McDonnell, *ISME*
- John McGrane, Paul Lynam, *British Irish Chamber of Commerce*

Apologies

Peter Burke, *Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment*

John Callinan, *Department of the Taoiseach*

1. Opening remarks by An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Harris T.D.

The Tánaiste welcomed the members of the Forum to the inaugural meeting and gave a brief overview of the major global events impacting the international trading environment.

In noting the approval by Government on 5 February to establish the Forum, the Tánaiste referred to the aim of providing a means to directly engage with key stakeholders and decision-makers, including business, on the latest and emerging trade and investment opportunities.

The Tánaiste outlined the terms of reference and working methods for the Forum, including the aim to meet regularly, at least every 8 weeks.

2. Priority actions for the Consultative Group

Members of the Forum were invited to provide a short overview of their perspectives on priority actions.

Potential priority actions for the Forum highlighted were:

- International trade and investment development opportunities
- Trade developments in multilateral fora
- Focus on regional markets
- Focus on specific sectors
- Imports and implications for supply chains
- Developing data and case studies to support deeper consideration of trade and investment issues
- Trade Mission planning
- Emerging trends and skills requirements in research and innovation

In conclusion, the Tánaiste tasked the Secretariat with preparing a work programme to be considered at the next meeting of the Trade Forum.

3. Trade developments – EU and US

Members exchanged on latest trade developments in respect of the EU and the United States.

4. Trade Missions 2025

The Government representatives, State Agencies and business representative groups provided brief updates on upcoming and potential trade mission activities in 2025, including the upcoming St Patrick's Day period.

5. Any other business

The Tánaiste summarised agreed actions for the Secretariat to take forward:

- Minutes of the meeting to be circulated to the members;
- Work-plan for the Forum to be developed, drawing on today's discussions; and
- Next meeting to be scheduled for April

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
28 February 2025

ENDS