

BUSINESSEUROPE



THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Mr Herman Van Rompuy
President
European Council
175 rue de la Loi
1000 Brussels
BELGIUM

Mr José Manuel Barroso
President
European Commission
1049 Brussels
BELGIUM

23 April 2010

Dear President van Rompuy, Dear President Barroso,

On 28 April, you will meet Prime Minister Hatoyama for the 19th bilateral EU-Japan Political Summit. Hereby you will have an important discussion on the future of EU-Japan relations, given that the EU-Japan Ten-Year Action Plan comes to an end. Before engaging into negotiations of a new bilateral framework, a thorough assessment should be made of the achievements and shortcomings of the last ten years.

BUSINESSEUROPE sees a lot of potential for the growth of trade and investment in a further strengthening of bilateral relations between the EU and Japan. The focus should be on the elimination of non-tariff measures, as well as dealing with cultural difference and consumer preferences, as this will be essential in order to remove existing barriers to trade and investment.


There are ongoing discussions between the European and Japanese authorities as to whether certain bilateral agreements e.g. an Economic Integration Agreement, Economic Partnership Agreement, or Free Trade Agreement, would provide the appropriate format for the future EU-Japan relationship. We do not think that pursuing these approaches would result in an acceptable balance between different interests from the EU and Japan in the areas of tariffs, regulatory and non-tariff barriers.

Thought is currently given to launching a joint study on the feasibility of such an agreement. Such a study could be useful if it assessed the achievements, as well as the shortcomings, of the existing structure of bilateral cooperation under the 2001-2010 Action Plan. It could help to get a better understanding of the real barriers to trade and investment. However, such a study should be open-ended without pre-empting the result. It should not start from the assumption that the study will automatically lead to the launch of negotiations of a bilateral agreement.

In order to deepen our bilateral relationship, BUSINESSEUROPE advocates the creation of a high-level EU-Japan Economic Partnership Council to strengthen and deepen EU-Japan relations. It should focus on issues of common interest and include potential concrete deliverables to be achieved within reasonable short timeframes.

I hope that you can support our proposal and wish you an interesting and successful EU-Japan Summit. Copies of this letter are sent to Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commission Vice-President, and Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards

Philippe de Buck