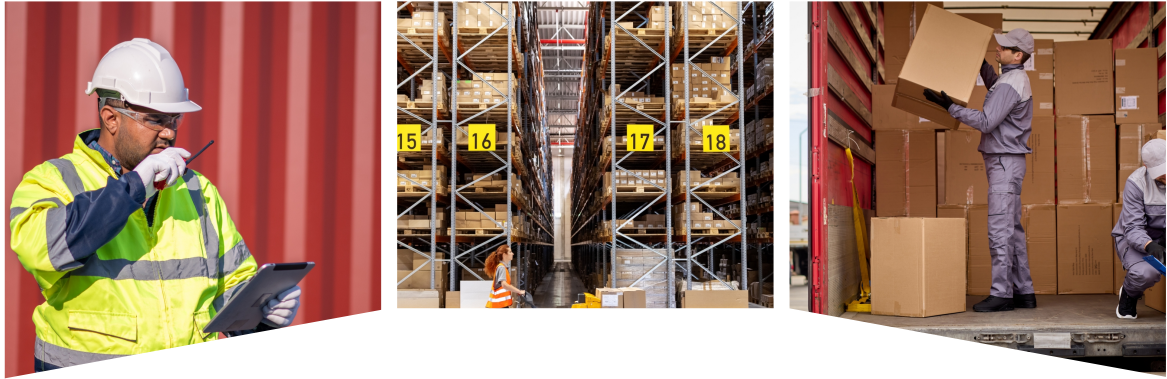




International Market Access

EFTA Ministerial Conference ***dominated by the trade conflict***

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At a glance

- The trade conflict was a key topic at the EFTA Ministerial Conference.
- After many years of negotiations, the free trade agreement with Malaysia was signed.
- Much progress has been made on the sectoral agreement on digital trade with Singapore.

This year's EFTA ministerial meeting was dominated by the trade dispute. As exporting nations, the EFTA states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are directly affected by the ongoing trade dispute.

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin led the Swiss delegation that traveled to Tromsø in Norway. The official highlight was the signing of the free trade agreement with Malaysia.

In the long term, the EFTA free trade agreement with Malaysia opens up access to an emerging economy. The country is aiming for a stronger market position in the manufacture of semiconductors, as well as in IT services. The protection of intellectual property - central to the innovation-based Swiss economy - has been secured.

Sustainability was improved, particularly for sensitive products, namely palm oil. Extensive sustainability standards were defined here. Protection against deforestation and biological diversity is also included, along with arbitration procedures. The fundamental labor rights of the International Labor Organization (ILO) are another important component of the agreement.

For the first time, a chapter on public procurement was agreed with an Asian country. Malaysia is promoting its own production of semiconductors, which is now its most important export product. The production of pharmaceutical and chemical products as well as digital services are also among the focal points of the support programs.

Security policy issues in the Arctic region were also addressed at the ministerial meeting. The region is increasingly becoming the focus of the major powers. In addition to the strategically important shipping routes, the wealth of raw materials in the Arctic region is of particular concern. The international discussions about Greenland therefore directly affect the EFTA states of Iceland and Norway in particular.



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