

## Meeting Summary: EP INTA Committee - State of play of EU-US trade relations

(3 September 2025)

### Key Takeaways

- The debate centred on the EU-US Joint Statement of 21 August 2025 and the resulting trade deal, struck between Presidents Trump and von der Leyen on 27 July. It triggered mixed reactions across Parliament, with concerns about democratic oversight, WTO compatibility, regulatory autonomy, and strategic dependency.
- Sabine Weyand (DG TRADE) and Matthias Jorgensen (DG TRADE) defended the agreement as the best outcome under US pressure, given the alternative risk of sweeping 30% tariffs. The deal capped US tariffs at an “all-inclusive” 15% for EU goods, avoided stacking over MFN tariffs, and introduced exemptions for key EU exports. Tariffs on cars were to be reduced retroactively from 27.5% to 15%. Sensitive EU agri-food goods were excluded, and regulatory autonomy in digital, food safety, and environment was maintained. The Commission claimed this safeguarded EU interests, preserved access to the US market, and created a platform for future engagement, despite acknowledging the deal’s non-binding nature.
- Chair Bernd Lange (S&D) criticised the lack of transparency, absence of a negotiating mandate, and divergence between Commission communication and the Joint Statement. He doubted the deal’s stability and questioned whether tariff concessions should proceed if the US retained Section 232 measures on steel and aluminium. Other S&D MEPs called the deal unbalanced and pushed for WTO compatibility, a review clause, and protection of CBAM and digital rules.
- The EPP recognised the deal’s limitations but emphasised the need for stability and asked for clarification on legal frameworks, WTO compatibility, and safeguard clauses. RE and Greens/EFA raised concerns about future concessions, especially in digital and agriculture. The Left denounced the deal as a surrender to US pressure, undermining EU sovereignty and climate commitments.
- ECR and P/E MEPs called the deal weak, questioned its legality, and warned of unequal treatment and strategic dependencies. Some, like Nicolas Bay, linked the deal to EU over-reliance on the US, while others demanded compensation for sectors like wine and spirits. Greens/EFA and Left MEPs denounced the lack of environmental safeguards and regulatory risks.
- The Commission defended the agreement’s structure and highlighted that it was designed as a short-term political response, not a formal trade agreement. Tariff-lowering legislative proposals were already tabled and could be voted on by Parliament, even if the Joint Statement itself was non-binding. The Commission maintained that WTO derogations were temporary and that broader trade reform efforts, including with Mercosur and CPTPP members, would continue in parallel.

### Chair, Bernd Lange (Germany, S&D)

- US President Trump and Commission President von der Leyen struck a deal on 27 July on trade, tariffs, and other issues;

- - A Joint Statement was released three and a half weeks after, which established a common understanding of the contents of the deal;
  - On 28 August, the Commission also released the first two legislative proposals on the topic;
- He believed that it was a day of confidence. The EU also published on the same day the proposal on the EU-Mercosur and EU-Mexico trade agreements;
- It was important to carry out trade relations based on fair partnerships with reliable partners;
- It was also a day of confidence because the Parliament could start a democratic process and scrutinise the activities of the Commission regarding the EU-US trade relations;
- - He stressed there was no mandate for the negotiations. The sole mandate was on zero-for-zero tariffs on industrial goods, which was not met;
  - During the summer break, contact between the Parliament and the Commission remained limited;
  - It was essential to discuss everything so that every issue could be ironed out democratically;
- The last briefing to INTA Members was on the meeting on 14 and 15 July. Several things had changed since then, and he was curious to know about it.

**Sabine Weyand, Director-General (European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security)**

- The EU and the US still had the largest trade relationship in the world, which surpassed € 1.7 trillion in 2024;
- Commissioner Šefčovič addressed the EP INTA Committee and the EP Plenary regularly throughout the year, but she admitted that the Joint Statement appeared in the middle of August, during the summer recess;
- Trade relations had been volatile in the previous months, as the situation was highly damaging for economic and trade interests. The priority was to restore stability and predictability to protect jobs and firms in the EU;
- The political agreement concluded at the end of July brought back that level of predictability, opening the door for strategic collaboration at a time of need for closer cooperation within the transatlantic bond;
- According to the Joint Statement issued on 21 August, the deal established key parameters for the EU-US trade relations going forward. She proceeded to highlight the key elements of it:

- There was an all-inclusive 15% percent tariff ceiling for EU goods coming into the US. Unlike other deals concluded by other trading partners with the US, this also included Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rates. This meant there would be no additional tariffs for goods that were already subject to MFN tariffs that were equal to or above 15%. This was called a "*no stacking*" element;
- She made the example for cheese, which had an MFN rate of 14.9%. The all-inclusive rate was 15%, without stacking. Other partners would pay the 14.9% on top of the reciprocal rate;
- There will be significant exemptions to the 15% ceiling for several EU products: this included unavailable natural resources such as cork, as well as aircraft and aircraft parts, generic pharmaceuticals, pharma ingredients, and chemical precursors;
- The EU secured a US commitment to consider other sectors and products that were important for both economies and supply chains on both sides, so that they could later be included in the list of products for which only the MFN tariff would apply;
- Those products would be a future matter of discussion with the US;
- There was an announced reduction, from 27.5% to 15% all-inclusive, on tariffs on cars and car parts. The reduction would be applied retroactively from 1 August, following the Commission's presentation of the proposals concerning the tariff elements of the Joint Statement;
- In the likely case of future tariffs on pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, and lumber, which were subject to Section 232 tariffs, the EU secured a 15% tariff ceiling. The US committed to that solution once the results of the 232 investigations on those investigations were concluded;
- The EU and the US committed to cooperation in the field of overcapacity in the steel and aluminium sectors;
- This included work to establish TRQs by the US for EU exports of steel and aluminium to ensure security of supply for such critical industries;
- The EU agreed to remove tariffs on all US industrial goods, expanding also market access for certain US seafood and non-sensitive agricultural products;
- Throughout the process, the Commission defended EU sensitivities, not putting forward tariff concessions that were sensitive to EU businesses, citizens, and farmers;
- The EU also made it clear that it would not compromise on its regulatory autonomy, which remained unaffected in all sector, including food, health and safety standards, as well as digital and data protection;
- She highlighted the points of strength of the deal, according to which the Parliamentary should support on the agreement and the legislative proposals connected to it:

- In any negotiations, there was a need to look at the possible alternatives. While the EU wished to trade under MFN duties, as it was in the past, that was no longer an option with the US;
- The US walked away from an MFN regime and had no intention to go back to that. The Trump administration was comfortable with tariffs, and increasing them. This was a different position from that of the EU, which needed to be considered as taxes on domestic businesses and consumers;
- The alternative, in the specific case, would have been a 30% tariff on all EU exports;
- This was the best deal available for the EU. Considering the wider transatlantic trade relationship, a 15% tariff still allowed for trade flows;
  - The Commission looked at trade data for Q2 2025, and whilst there was more need to analyze flows, exports held firm and in certain cases increased;
  - This was the case because the US would simply not be able to produce all the products it put tariffs on, which entailed that imports would not stop flowing from the EU to the US;
- Competitiveness with the US did not depend on the duties paid to them, but rather in comparison with other trade partners;
  - This was the reason why this was the best possible deal. The "no stacking" principle was also important because the previous 10% reciprocal tariff on all EU exports to the US did not account for other existing tariff rates;
- There was one big exception to EU exports to the US holding up, and that was cars. In Q2 2025, the tariff of 27.5% created a drop in exports to the US;
  - This entailed that there was a level at which US tariffs became prohibitive. The US was trying to test it, but the 15% all-inclusive rate still allowed for trade to flow;
- The deal also created a platform for engagement. Besides renewed predictability and stability, policy-making in the US was in full swing;
  - The platform created allowed the EU and the US to build on the agreement in a way that could enhance bilateral trade and investment;
  - The agreement could also be the platform to discuss all relevant issues relating to the transatlantic relationship;
- The proposals were put forward in August already to secure the lowering of car tariffs to 15% as of 1 August, which would be implemented on the US side at any moment;

- The US already took other steps. On 31 July, they issued an executive order introducing the all-inclusive 15% tariff on imports of goods to the EU;
- As of 1 September, the US applied only MFN tariffs to the EU goods exempted from the 15% tariff ceiling. Those tariffs were either 0% or close to it;
- The proposals were the EU's commitment to upholding the agreement. The first one would lower tariffs for US industrial goods coming to the EU, and they would ensure preferential access for several seafood and non-sensitive agricultural products, such as tree nuts, dairy products, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, processed foods, planting seeds, soybean oil, pork and bison meat;
  - None of the sensitive agrifood products for the EU were included in the list;
  - The second proposal would extend the tariff-free treatment on an MFN basis for imports of lobster, which was also expanded to processed lobster;
- Discussions between the Commission and the Parliaments could start as soon as the following Monitoring Group, and she was available to come before the INTA Committee again to explain the mechanisms that led to the decision;
  - The trade off was still good, particularly in comparison to what other countries got from the US.

*Round of interventions from the Standing Rapporteur and shadows*

**Bernd Lange (Germany, S&D)**

- The details of the deal needed to be looked at thoroughly, so that the economic interest of the EU was preserved;
- He was happy to see that the Parliament could finally look at the proposal, given that there was no mandate from it, but rather a decision from the Commission;
  - The impression he got was that the EU got pressured into an agreement by the US;
- The argument of stability of predictability was not real. Two weeks after the new deal was announced, the US extended the products covered by the Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminium;
  - This also included motorcycles, pumps, and other products. This was a hard hit for those producers, and was certainly not stability and predictability;
  - The US also threatened additional tariffs on semiconductors to countries applying digital protection laws, such as the EU's DSA and DMA;

- The only argument he could accept was the security narrative, according to which the EU accepted an unbalanced deal in exchange for the US commitment to supporting Ukraine;
- Tariffs on steel also increased while talks were underway. This was not correct;
- It was important to look ahead, towards the proposals;
  - He asked whether the EU should still bring tariffs on industrial products down, when the US kept adding those to the increased tariffs on steel and aluminium;
  - His understanding of the steel and aluminium tariffs was that they would eventually be lowered. He asked when and how that could happen in the future;
- There was a difference between the communication from the Commission and the Joint Statement;
  - He asked whether there would be a sunset clause, given that nobody exactly knew what would happen in the US. Moreover, he wondered how the EU could eventually review its position in case of developments going in a different direction;
- On WTO compatibility, he was surprised not to see a single mention of the WTO in the text. This undermined the EU's commitments to the WTO;
  - If this was the start of negotiations with the US for a more comprehensive agreement, then there was a need to mention the WTO and to make it work accordingly;
  - He believed it would be difficult for the EU to explain to other partners within the WTO to explain the logic of the EU-US agreement;
  - He urged to make clear that the EU was committed to the EU. This was also the case for agricultural products;
- The US understood that such deals would be the new normal in trade. He wondered whether the Commission subscribed to such view.

#### **Željana Zovko (Croatia, EPP)**

- She welcomed the deal as a sign of continuity for EU-US trade relations;
- Businesses needed stability for the future;
- A new world order was being created with all the countries that did not make a deal with the US;
- At the same time, there was a need for further certainty and transparency from the Commission on the next steps;
  - She wondered how the Commission planned on convincing Member States (MS) and the different groups of the Parliament;
- She asked about the next steps towards the fine-tuning of the provisions of the agreement;

- She also asked the basis used by the Commission to select which industries could benefit from the deal, given certain positions were not taken into account, leaving behind several industries.

#### **Thierry Mariani (France, P/E)**

- The Americans risked being hated by everyone;
- President Trump dictated the conditions of the deal, creating an unequal deal;
- Tariff rates rose, particularly for cars. The spirits sector was living a catastrophe, and this deal exacerbated such conditions;
- The EU paid for their reliance on the US, which was built on by the Commission itself, given that it handicapped the sovereignty of MS.

#### **Rihards Kols (Latvia, ECR)**

- He welcomed the end of the prolonged uncertainty. However, the deal raised more questions than answers;
- The deal was not a legally binding agreement, but rather a political statement which was weak, flexible, and lacked enforceability;
  - However, it created real consequences for EU businesses and consumers;
- Postal services from certain MS suspended deliveries to the US due to regulatory inconsistencies, and companies needed to navigate the uncertainty;
- His group called for two main elements;
  - Legal clarity needed to be provided by the Commission, outlining the elements of the deal and what resources businesses had;
  - The Parliament could not be reduced to a bystander. Accountability needed to still exist;
    - On that, he asked what could be reviewed within the deal, what the timeline was for it, and whether there was a formal review clause with deadlines;
    - He wanted to avoid new tariff announcements.

#### **Karin Karlsbro (Sweden, RE)**

- The agreement was not the deal the EU wanted;
- There was a need to draw a red line on what could be acceptable in EU-US relations;
- The agreement was delivered on increasing stability;
- She was worried about the concessions the EU could make in the future, particularly on digital matters;
  - Trump could not dictate how digital companies operated in the EU. It was essential to protect children from addictive use and infinite scrolling;
  - It was up to the EU to decide.

### **Anna Cavazzini (Germany, Greens/EFA)**

- The Commission had a difficult job to balance all interests while having to accommodate Trump's questionable decisions;
- She hoped for a moment of European unity, which did not seem to materialise;
- The deal increased dependencies, which was not the right way to go;
- She asked on numerous occasions whether the EU's own laws were under threat, to which the Commission replied negatively;
  - However, provisions in the Joint Statement looked to be affecting the EU's regulatory autonomy, even for laws that were yet to be discussed in the European Parliament;
- The big issue to be resolved was stability. However, new announcements or expanding the scope of steel and aluminium tariffs risked not creating the stability the EU hoped for;
- She believed that a stronger stance from the EU could have secured a better deal.

### **Martin Schirdewan (Germany, The Left)**

- The explanation provided by the Commission were weak;
- Stability could not depend on the mood of the sitting US President;
- The current situation was far from being the ideal one, and the EU did not deal with the inequalities of the agreement;
- He criticised the commitments to spend more money that would favour fracking and purchases of American oil;
  - It was a disaster for climate commitments in the EU;
- So much investment was required in the EU, yet the deal certified that billions of euros were going to the US military-industrial complex;
- The European digital market would continue to be in the hands of a few US companies;
- This agreement showed how weak the EU acted in the face of adversity and damaged its reputation with partners;
- He asked what could be done to make it better in the future.

### **Chair of the Delegation for relations with the United States, Brando Benifei (Italy, S&D)**

- Cooperation needed to be fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial;
  - The deal fell short on those elements;
- On cars and car parts, he asked when the US could formally scale back on that;
  - Since the agreements had a retroactive effect, he asked when the tariff reimbursements could happen;



- On the sunset clause issue, he asked why the Commission did not include it. It would be the bare minimum for the Commission to include it to safeguard WTO rules and avoid locking itself into an unbalanced deal;
- On steel, he asked whether it could have been better to withhold market access to leverage better conditions for TRQs;
  - The vague wording on steel overcapacity was too weak, making the need to address those even more urgent;
- On tariff revenue losses, he asked for a figure on those;
- He called for transparency and a democratic process.

**Sabine Weyand, Director-General (European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security)**

- She stated that her impression of the debate was that MEPs wanted to take the responsibility of US tariff policy from the Commission;
- She pointed out that the Commission considered tariffs "a bad thing", but still needed to engage with the US for the sake of the EU's interest;
- She argued that the Commission succeeded in safeguarding Europe's interests in the light of President Trump's policies;
- She understood the previous complaints from MEPs;
  - She underlined the comments made on the Commission's lack of action to defend the EU's interests;
  - The argument wasn't true;
  - No other countries managed to negotiate a better deal than the EU;
- She added that the Commission had pushed for a "zero-to-zero tariffs" policy from the beginning of the negotiations, but could not conclude;
  - Moreover, the work was not over on the deal, as there was a remaining agenda to implement;
    - Notably, on the topic of steel and aluminium;
    - Also, on other products such as wines, spirits and beers, along with other ones;
- She highlighted the importance of the joint statement, which created a platform;
  - Additionally, the statement was not a binding agreement;
  - The decision to issue a joint statement was made according to the need for a quick response;
  - There were a lot of outstanding discussions, but both parties were in the process of implementing parts of the agreement through executive orders;
- The Commission was still discussing with the US on other parts of the joint statement;

- She added that the Parliament would be kept informed when the Commission gets more clarity on the provisions;
- If the deal were to result in an international agreement, the procedure would follow the traditional legislative process;
- She highlighted that the Commission was subjected to pressure from Member States and stakeholders to come up with a negotiated outcome;
  - She added that some of these Member States changed their opinion and now call for countermeasures;
  - The European Parliament Plenary also pushed for a negotiated agreement;
- She outlined that countries that retaliated with countermeasures were in a worse position than the EU, as the tariffs were implemented;
  - This consolidated the Commission's view that the EU's interests were protected;
- She called for a proper technical discussion explaining how the Commission designed the tariff-rate quotas;
  - She highlighted the 4.7 billion euros of tariff revenues forgone, which was only 1% of the overall volume of US exports;
  - Moreover, 67% of industrial exports from the US already entered the EU tariff-free beforehand;
- She raised concerns about the bigger picture, wondering if the world had entered a new global order;
  - She stated that the world was in a stage of global disorder, which would become permanent;
  - The EU had the task of designing a new order;
    - This was called to reinforce partnerships with big trade partners;
    - The US only accounted for 20% of the EU's trade;
- This focus on other trade partners was the right context to push forward the proposal on Mercosur and Mexico;
  - She stated that the future of EU trade would come from bilateral agreements, in the spirit of open plurilateralism;
  - In this view, the EU was also backing the CPTPP members;
- Commissioner Šefčovič would focus on this file in the autumn of 2025, with updates to come;
  - She added that the WTO needed to be strengthened and reformed to restore confidence in multilateralism.

## *Round of interventions from the Political Group Coordinators*

### **Jörgen Warborn (Sweden, EPP)**

- He acknowledged that the deal was hard to defend in front of the US;
- He agreed with the MEPs' criticism of the joint statement;
  - The statement was unbalanced;
  - However, the Commission had still done what it could;
- The role of MEPs in this file was delicate;
  - Members would not vote on the joint statement, but instead on the legislative proposals reducing the tariffs;
- Overall, he supported the approval of the joint statement to de-escalate the situation;
- He asked the Commission if the deal was compatible with the WTO;
  - He also asked for the next steps of the process and the timeline.

### **Kathleen Van Brempt (Belgium, S&D)**

- She highlighted that the S&D group had a consensus on the fact that the agreement was not a good deal;
  - She called to focus on WTO compatibility and international trade law;
  - She added that the Commission should be mindful not to undermine any legislation, notably on CBAM or digital rules;
    - The deal could cause harm to the implementation of a certain number of legislations;
- The deal needed to be a compromise, but also needed to be fair;
  - It should not hinder the EU's economic interest;
  - The S&D had called the Commission to defend European industries and workers, especially in light of the 50% tariffs on steel and aluminium;
- She regretted that the Commission did not team up with other trade partners earlier.

### **Enikő Győri (Hungary, PEF)**

- She appreciated the work of the Commission on the situation;
- She criticised the Commission President for delegating the political responsibility to the Director-General;
- The joint statement was a "shame" for the EU;
- More than a question of trade, the situation was a question of security;
  - The statement was a political package designed to "continue to help Eastern partners, especially Ukraine";

- The EU would "sell out to the US";
- Ideology was being brought into economic and trade policy, which undermined the EU's competitiveness;
- She argued that the joint statement was not a success;
  - She asked about the situation for LNG producers, for which the Commission did not have a mandate;
  - She also asked if the Commission planned to pay compensation to the wine sector.

#### **Nicolas Bay (France, ECR)**

- He was "shocked by the degree of naivety and immaturity shown by the European Commission";
- He stated that the deal was rushed on the last day of negotiations, to avoid the threat of a 30% blanket tariff;
- He added that unregulated trade policies created unfair competition;
- The Mercosur agreement would sacrifice EU farmers, who were subjected to stricter standards;
  - Moreover, mirror clauses would not be respected.

#### **Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (France, RE)**

- She stated that those who would have voted in favour of the agreement wanted the same policies as President Trump at the European level;
  - Protection was policy;
- Co-legislators had previously voted for preventive measures to avoid blackmail, such as the anti-coercion instrument;
  - She regretted that the EU did not make use of the instrument;
- She argued that signing up to protection policies hindered the EU's credibility.

#### **Saskia Bricmont (Belgium, Greens/EFA)**

- She agreed with other MEPs that the deal was unbalanced;
- She followed up on MEP Vedrenne's mention of the anti-coercion instrument;
  - The non-use of the instrument questioned the Commission's power in the situation;
- She added that European industries would be asked to invest 600 billion euros in the US;
  - She wondered why the Commission agreed to this, as the Draghi report called for investments in the green transition domestically;
- She asked the Commission where the balance was in the deal;

- Notably, as President Trump kept coming forward with new demands;
- She also wondered about the risk of strategic dependencies that the EU was trying to avoid.

#### **Marina Mesure (France, The Left)**

- She argued that the EU "had never seen a more unfair deal";
- She stated that the EU's intention to buy US oil included in the deal was going against the Commission's autonomy and decarbonisation objectives;
  - Moreover, the Commission had planned to strengthen the European defence industry, while agreeing to buy American military equipment;
- She stated that decades of free-trade policy led to the EU's dependence on functional trade;
- She concluded that the Left would reject the legislation.

#### **Javier Moreno Sánchez (Spain, S&D)**

- He agreed with the points raised by MEP van Brempt;
- He highlighted three takeaways;
  - First, there was a need for details and clarification;
  - Second, the process was just at its start;
  - Third, the change in world order mentioned by the Director-General would need to be closely monitored;
    - He asked the Commission if they intended to abandon multilateralism;
- He raised concerns regarding the timeframe of the agreement;
  - He highlighted that customs duties were currently being brought up to courts on the US side;
- He asked who in the Commission would be presenting the legislative proposals.

#### **Iuliu Winkler (Romania, EPP)**

- He stated that volatility was harmful to industries
  - He welcomed the deal, as it brought relative stability;
  - The agreement also brought a relative competitiveness advantage;
- He asked if the agreement was the first step of an upward process or a downward process for the EU;
- He also asked what review clauses or modifications to the deal were foreseen by the Commission, to ensure WTO compatibility.

#### **Jessika Van Leeuwen (Netherlands, EPP)**

- She argued that 15% tariffs were not a good situation, but were necessary to avoid a trade war;
- She asked the Commission about what would happen if the US Federal Court ruled the deal illegal, or if it was upheld in the Supreme Court;
- She added that the agreement was disadvantaging EU agriculture;
  - The standards on hormones and antimicrobial resistance were lower in the US, which posed a threat to the European food chain if US products entered the European market;
  - She asked the Commission to expand on the impact assessment done on the increased access for agricultural products from the US to the EU
    - She also asked about potential compensation for EU farmers.

#### **Christophe Bay (France, PFE)**

- He highlighted the Director-General's comment about American taxpayers paying the price of increased tariffs;
  - He pointed out that the increase in customs duties would be accompanied by a reduction in federal taxes.

#### **Benoit Cassart (Belgium, RE)**

- He highlighted the Commission's comment that Europeans and Americans would work together to eliminate tariff barriers;
  - He asked if the Parliament should understand this statement as a declaration of non-respect for European food standards in imports coming from the US.

#### **Nina Carberry (Ireland, EPP)**

- She acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Commission in elaborating the deal;
- However, the agreement was not satisfying;
- She asked the Commission what "near-zero" tariffs meant;
- She raised the issue of the Digital Market Act and Digital Services Act, which were in the view of US policies;
  - She asked the Commission how they planned to respond;
- Lastly, she asked if the spirit sector would benefit from larger exemptions in the coming months.

#### **Lukas Sieper (Germany, NI)**

- He believed the agreement was not a good deal;
- He asked the Commission how they apprehended the fact that many of President Trump's policies were ruled as illegal in US courts;
- He also asked about the promised European investments in the US;

- Notably, he wondered what the Commission would do if companies were not following the intentions.

#### **Jean-Marc Germain (France, S&D)**

- He stated that the agreement was a political choice;
- He asked the Commission about how they envisaged a balanced deal for the case of services.

#### **Vicent Marzà Ibáñez (Spain, Greens/EFA)**

- He was worried about the credibility of the Commission after this debate;
- He wondered why the EU was pushing for a rule-based trade system, while accepting an agreement that went against that principle;
- He highlighted that the deal protected certain sensitive sectors for the US, not for Europeans;
- He asked what the benefits of this deal were for the EU.

#### **Branislav Ondruš (Slovakia, NI)**

- He stated that the proposals were part of a comprehensive decision which deepened the EU's dependency on the US;
- The agreement was a step in the wrong direction;
  - The Commission should put forward credible and feasible proposals;
- He argued that political, military and trade relations were becoming more and more unpredictable;
  - He called for a global European strategy to address those issues.

#### **Cristina Maestre (Spain, S&D)**

- She believed that the agreement was "a historic mistake";
  - The deal would hurt the production sector for many goods, including cheese, meats and wine;
  - The agreement provided the import of 500 million kilos of dried fruits into the EU, along with other products, at a 0% tariff rate;
  - With this agreement, the Commission showed disdain towards the European agricultural sector and its health and environmental standards.

#### **Sabine Weyand, Director-General (European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security)**

- She underlined that alternatives to the agreement had been discussed;
  - Notably, countermeasures which were suspended;
- She also raised the issue of the polarisation of debate inside the EU;

- She highlighted that the discussions were part of a long-term plan;
- The EU needed to find a way to work with the US administration;
- She pointed out that Commissioner Šefčovič was in daily contact with his American counterparts, notably on the topic of car imports ;
  - The date at which the US would lower the tariffs on the automotive sector was not clear yet;
  - The tariff cut would apply retroactively and lead to a reimbursement of the customs duties already perceived;
- She welcomed the achievement of bringing tariffs on aircraft to zero on a MFN basis, and aimed to expand this system to other products;
- She answered the question on what "near-zero tariffs" meant, stating that it represented a rate between 0 and 3%;
- She asked the MEPs to compare the tariff situation negotiated by the EU to the realistic alternatives that could be;
- On the question of WTO compatibility, she highlighted that the agreement was striving for WTO compatibility going forward;
  - The US was refusing to sign up for a zero-to-zero approach, but no countries were trading with the US on a WTO basis;
  - The EU was pushing for preferential treatment in tariff terms, which was a derogation to WTO rules;
    - The EU would temporarily not be in line with Article 24 of WTO;
  - She highlighted that reforming the WTO was difficult;
  - The agreement liberated the EU to work with other partners, notably through bilateral deals;
- She outlined that the deal provided a possibility for the EU to suspend the agreement, notably on the grounds of non-compliance with the agreement's objectives, undermining of the European or US market;
  - She added that the deal also included a safeguard clause in the case of harmful import surges, or a change of trade circumstances;
  - She pointed out that the suspension and safeguard clauses were particularly broad;
- On the issue of regulatory autonomy, she stated that the EU's legislation was sacrosanct, at every level;
  - The deal was not a compromise on health and environmental standards for meat;
  - The US were prevented from exporting pork meat to the EU due to those standards, which hindered them from using WTO quotas;



- - She stated that the EU would not modify its standards, but would work to facilitate the task of the US administration;
  - This issue needed to be further discussed in view of the implementation stage;
- On investments, she stated that the promised funds were an aggregation of intentions to invest by EU companies;
  - The language used in the deal was prudent on purpose;
  - The same principle applied to the promised energy purchases;
    - The clean transition objective was not questioned;
    - The energy purchases would help bridge the transition between the current energy mix and the greener future;
  - The aggregation of investment demand was not a commitment on the EU's side;
- Lastly, she responded to the comments about the case of the US courts potentially declaring the tariffs as illegal;
  - She stated that President Trump intended to lead the case in front of the Supreme Court;
  - She refrained from predicting as to what this would entail;
    - She highlighted that the part ruled illegal in courts was the IEEPA legal base;
    - However, other legal bases were available;
    - The tariffs would then likely not fallout;
- She underlined that President von der Leyen and Commissioner Šefčovič would attend the Plenary session in the upcoming week;
- She concluded that the institutions had a lot of work ahead of them in the trade field and beyond.

#### **Chair Bernd Lange (Germany, S&D)**

- He stated that the deadline for comments on the opinion from the INTA Committee to the AFET Committee on the EU-US relations would be extended to 11 September 2025.