EU considers ‘pause for thought’ on GMOs

EU environment ministers have failed to agree to force Austria to lift a national ban on GMOs, highlighting deep divisions among the 27-member bloc over the issue. For the third time in a row since 2005, the environment ministers failed, on 30 October 2007, to find a qualified majority for or against a Commission proposal to lift restrictions on the provisional prohibition of the use and sale in Austria of two genetically modified (GM) varieties of maize. It will now be up to the Commission to make the decision. The Commission proposed forcing Austria to drop its national ban on importing two types of GM maize (MON810 and T25) and processing them into food and feed in order to conform to WTO rules. The ministers also discussed an Italian proposal to strengthen the powers of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), based in Parma, and change the authorization procedure for GMOs.

The World Bank’s 2008 Doing Business Survey

The World Bank released last week their 2008 Doing Business Survey. In the report, economies are ranked on their ease of doing business, from 1 – 178, with first place being the best. A high ranking on the ease of doing business index means the regulatory environment is conducive to the operation of business. Of the European nations, Denmark ranked highest at 5th place. The report can be found at www.doingbusiness.org.

Georgia Successfully Implementing Political, Economic Reforms

Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs speaking November 1 at the "Developing Europe's East" conference in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, said the former Soviet republic has enacted economic reforms that vaulted it from 112 to 18 on the World Bank’s Doing Business report, and Georgia continues to attract increasing sums of foreign investment. In addition, the World Bank named the Georgian government the world’s leading reformer last year. Georgia is seeking membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO. Fried said that there should be no doubt that the United States supports Georgia's NATO aspirations.

Germany plans law against foreign takeovers

Germany plans to introduce a law preventing takeovers of strategic industries, in a move directed against sovereign wealth funds originating in countries such as Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia and China. The law also targets hedge funds and state holdings from non-EU
countries, such as Russia's Gazprom. The law would give the German federal government the right to veto any foreign investment amounting to 25% or more of a company's stakes. When such an investment is notified, the government would have four weeks to either approve or veto it. In cases of secretive investments on stock markets, the government would have three months to decide and could even call for a roll-back of the deal - a move that is intended to encourage foreign investors to notify partial takeover bids. As Süddeutsche reports, the draft does not name specific industry branches besides defense and encryption, where foreign investment is already subject to national regulation. The sole criterion for a possible veto is, according to the report, national security.

U.S. Chamber Events & Highlights

- On November 13, the National Chamber Foundation presents a conference on “Breaking the Barriers: The BIG Business of Nanotechnology”. There is a little doubt that nanotechnology offers enormous economic and societal benefits through a wide variety of potential applications. Despite the promise of nanotechnology challenges remain. Many critics are advocating a moratorium on all nano-containing products until all environmental, health, and safety issues have been resolved. This important event will bring together key industry leaders, lawmakers, and the media to discuss different perspectives on this revolutionary technology.

- On November 15, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce will co-host an event on “Keeping America’s Workforce Healthy: Prevention, Wellness, and Behavior”. Join senior government officials and business leaders for Keeping America’s Workforce Healthy: Prevention, Wellness, and Behavior, co-hosted by the National Chamber Foundation, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and The Coalition to Advance Healthcare Reform. This important event will discuss the merits of workplace wellness programs and the benefits of managing a healthy workforce.

- The Eurasia Business Platform will hold its First Annual Conference on "Growth Imperatives and Regional Responsibilities" on December 3.

- The U.S.-EU High Level Regulatory Forum between OMB and the European Union will be meeting on Thursday, November 8th in advance of the inaugural meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Council. The High Level Forum will consist of nearly 40 key U.S. and EU regulators. As part of their deliberations there will be an afternoon of consultation and discussion with the private sector.

American Chambers of Commerce Events & Activities

There are 43 American Chambers of Commerce (AmChams) in Europe and Eurasia, which are affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Armenia

- On November 12, AmCham Armenia will host a membership meeting with Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, who will discuss recent foreign policy issues with AmCham membership.

- On November 23, AmCham Armenia will host a membership meeting with Mr. Davit Harutyunyan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on State and Legal
Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic Armenia, who will discuss issues related to judicial reforms in Armenia and possible AmCham participation in drafting laws and regulations that would impact the investment and business climate in Armenia for both the international and local businesses.

- On November 30, AmCham Armenia will host a membership meeting with Mr. Avet Adonts, Chairman of the Standing Committee on European Integration of the National Assembly of the Republic Armenia, who will discuss issues related to European integration and its effects on Armenia’s international relations, the current status of harmonization of the Republic of Armenia laws with the European legislation and other related issues.
- On December 15, AmCham Armenia will host its Annual Christmas Gala Dinner.

**Austria**

- On November 7, AmCham Austria will host a Business Breakfast with Bertrand Dussauge, Marketing Director Lexis Nexis Intelligence Solutions, who will speak on “Hear the grass growing!”
- On November 21, AmCham Austria will host a Thanksgiving Reception.

**Belgium**

- On November 6, AmCham Belgium will host an exclusive lunch for patron members only where they will give AmCham Belgium’s CEOs a preview of the 2007/2008 Foreign Investors Agenda (FIA) and an opportunity to discuss its recommendations with US Ambassador Sam Fox.
- On November 8, join AmCham Belgium for the last “Business After Hours” cocktail reception of 2007.
- On November 22, AmCham Belgium will host a CEO event for Patron and Sustaining members on “Ways to improve the net impact of senior executives’ compensation package”.
- On November 27, AmCham Belgium will host a lunch with Minister President of Wallonia on Innovation in Wallonia.
- On December 4, AmCham Belgium will be holding a comparative EU/US innovation conference supported by the US Embassy and AmCham EU. This event will examine how the US and the EU compare in terms of encouraging innovation, and determine best practices to promote innovation and research in the EU.

**BritishAmerican Business**

- On November 8, BritishAmerican Business will hold a meeting on “Doing Business in the US”.
- On November 13, BritishAmerican Business will host an event regarding biofuels “Biofuels: Current Issues and Future Prospects”.

- On November 21, BritishAmerican Business will host an event about “The Commercialization of IP”.
- On November 23, BritishAmerican Business will host a member luncheon.
- On November 29, BritishAmerican Business will host an event “Evening with the Philharmonic Orchestra”.
- On December 11, BritishAmerican Business will hold “Annual Christmas Lunch 2007”. Sponsored by HSBC Bank, Invest in Northern Ireland, Knight Frank Newmark, and Roxby Media Ltd.

**Bulgaria**

- On November 13, AmCham Bulgaria invites you for charity fundraising through a silent auction at the Thanksgiving Community Dinner.
- On November 14, AmCham Bulgaria and EU Affairs Committee will be holding a meeting about “EU – India Relations and New Opportunities for Bulgaria?”
- On December 11 and 12, AmCham Bulgaria will be participating in The Economist Conference: Seventh Business Roundtable with the Government of Bulgaria – Making EU membership work for businesses.
- On December 11, AmCham Bulgaria will host a Christmas Party.

**Croatia**

- On November 29, AmCham Croatia will host the Annual General Assembly.
- On November 29, AmCham Croatia will hold its election for the new Board of Governors.

**Denmark**

- On November 14, AmCham Denmark invites members and colleagues to join for a Power Lunch with International Herald Tribune Executive Editor Michael Oreskes, who will talk about his recent publication, "The Genius of America: How the Constitution Saved Our Country--and Why it Can Again". Further, Mr. Oreskes will discuss the controversial upcoming election.
- On November 25, AmCham Denmark will hold its 6th annual Family Thanksgiving Dinner. As part of the evening's program, U.S. Ambassador to Denmark, James P. Cain, will read the President's Thanksgiving Proclamation, the Copenhagen chapter of the Cub Scouts of America will perform a flag ceremony, and the guests will enjoy the gospel singings of The Gentofte Gospel Choir.
- On December 11, AmCham Denmark will partner with the Copenhagen Business School for the 3rd annual Copenhagen Conference on Strategic Management. This year's conference will focus on Innovation in Corporate Strategy Development and will feature Professor Robert Burgelman, Stanford University and Professor Yves Doz, INSEAD.
Finland

- On November 14, The Barber of Seville will entertain the AmCham Finland community at the Finnish National Opera.
- On November 29, AmCham Finland will host the Thanksgiving Dinner.
- Kosovo
  - On November 8, AmCham Kosovo with cooperation of USAID will organize already the fourth Career Fair.

Norway

- On November 22, AmCham Norway will host a Thanksgiving Charity Evening Event.

Poland

- On November 5, AmCham Poland will organize a meeting with Prof. Lena Kolarska Bobińska about the current political situation in Poland and its outlook into the near future.
- On November 7, AmCham Poland will hold its monthly meeting. The guest speaker will be Ludwik Sobolewski, President of the Warsaw Stock Exchange.
- On November 8, AmCham Poland will host a meeting for companies engaged or interested in outsourcing to discuss common issues and new ideas that AmCham can pursue.
- On November 13, AmCham Poland’s Environmental Committee will hold a meeting with Prof. Robert Stavins, Director of Harvard Environmental Economics Program, on global climate change.
- On November 13, AmCham Poland will host a meeting with Max Boot, Senior Fellow for National Security Studies, on global security threats, the military technology development, and its impact on the course of European history.

Sweden

- On November 9, AmCham Sweden will celebrate 15th Anniversary Jubilee followed by Gala Dinner.
- On November 12, AmCham Sweden will hold a Young Professional Event “U.S. 2008 Presidential Election.”
- On November 13, AmCham Sweden will host a Business Breakfast with Göran Persson, Senior Advisor in JKL Group and former Prime Minister of Sweden, about the topic “The Business community versus Politicians.”
- November 14, AmCham Sweden will host a Business Breakfast with Nyamko Sabuni, Minister for Integration and Gender Equality, and Ivan Daza, Managing Director, Blatteförmedlingen.
- On November 17, AmCham Sweden will celebrate Thanksgiving with American Club.
- On December 11, AmCham Sweden will host Christmas Party.
Turkey

- On November 5, TABA/AmCham’s Chairman Mr. Ugur Terzioglu will be attending Turkey President Abdullah Gul’s reception.
- On November 9, TABA/AmCham’s Chairman Mr. Ugur Terzioglu will hold a press conference regarding recent events on Iraqi border and against PKK terrorists.
- On November 16, a joint meeting will be held with TABA/AmCham Bursa – Ankara – Adana Branches to discuss a position against a group of people and their boycott of U.S. materials.

Ukraine

On November 19, AmCham Ukraine will hold Chamber’s Banking and Financial Services Committee Meeting.

On November 22, AmCham Ukraine will hold Chamber’s Legal Committee Meeting.

On November 27, AmCham Ukraine will hold its Agricultural Committee Meeting

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