

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

The Right Honorable Baroness Catherine Ashton  
Trade Commissioner  
European Commission  
200 Rue de la Loi  
B-1049 Brussels

30 November 2008

Dear Commissioner,

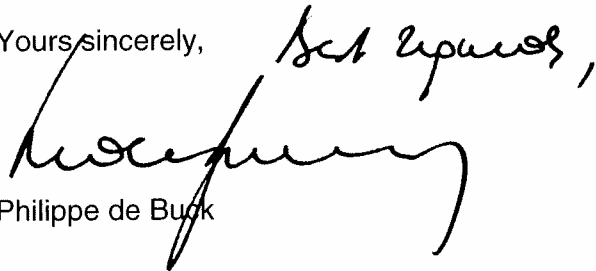
BUSINESSEUROPE appreciates the Communication on raw materials in which the European Commission outlines an integrated strategy for securing reliable and undistorted access to raw materials. Although the financial crisis and the global economic slowdown have recently led to a decline in prices of raw materials, the need for stable and undistorted access to raw materials has not become less urgent. On the contrary, we are concerned that the current economic circumstances could produce a new wave of protectionism and distortions to the raw materials market.

Consequently, the timely implementation of the initiative will be of key importance for ensuring reliable and undistorted access to raw materials. We therefore urge the European Commission to pursue the actions outlined in the initiative's three pillars. We count on you to ensure that implementation of the proposed responses related to trade policy are made a priority.

The EU must actively counter export restrictions by recourse to the WTO dispute settlement system, using trade defence instruments to counter distorting practices and reforming the Trade Barriers Regulation. Likewise we also call for a rapid lowering of EU import duties or restrictions for raw materials, including renewables, needed by industry as inputs for manufacturing. In addition, we urge you to ensure that free trade of raw materials becomes a condition for preferential access to the European market for other countries products in the framework of the General System of Preferences (GSP).

European industry is convinced of the value of the proposed approach and is committed to working together with the European Commission to ensure its implementation. We look forward to being actively involved in the implementation of this important initiative.

Yours sincerely,

  
Philippe de Buck