

## **Executive Yuan launches trade negotiations office (September 20, 2016)**

After more than a month of preparation, the Executive Yuan inaugurated the Office of Trade Negotiations today as part of its strategy to promote trade diplomacy. The policy goals of the office include:

1. Promoting multilateral and bilateral economic and trade negotiations, and engaging in regional economic integration.
2. Combining public and private resources to renew economic and trade diplomacy and promote international cooperation.
3. Engaging in negotiations and international cooperation to adjust Taiwan's economic structure and bring economic and trade regulations in line with world standards.

After a briefing by Executive Yuan Minister without Portfolio John Deng on September 19, President Tsai Ing-wen said the office is being established in response to new economic trends worldwide. The office is not a new entity but a modification of the government's foreign trade negotiation team—one that will divide tasks and utilize manpower more efficiently.

The new office will primarily be staffed by personnel from the previous trade negotiation team under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, with more negotiators to be added for industry and food safety issues. Deng will serve as chief negotiator while Deputy Foreign Minister Javier Hou, Vice Minister of Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua and another person appointed by Premier Lin

Chuan will serve as deputy chiefs. Mid-level officials from designated government agencies will also serve as senior negotiators. The deputy chiefs and senior negotiators will oversee cooperation efforts with the economics ministry, the foreign ministry and other agencies.

The office's first tasks will be to prepare for negotiations on the Trade in Services Agreement and the Environmental Goods Agreement under the World Trade Organization, promote the New Southbound Policy, and continue pushing Taiwan's membership bid in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Executive Yuan said.

For the New Southbound Policy, the office will work with agencies to inventory current resources and finalize a work plan; discuss the focus and methods of implementation with local governments and set up a mechanism to coordinate central and local efforts; survey targeted countries on their needs and willingness for cooperation; map out comprehensive action plans for each targeted country; and help agencies build communication channels and expedite bilateral collaboration.

In preparation for the TPP, the office will work with agencies to harmonize domestic laws with the trade agreement and continue expressing Taiwan's participation desires to TPP members. The Executive Yuan will also fast-track an international trade agreement oversight bill to the Legislature, which will provide

a legal basis for Taiwan's participation in the TPP and serve as a framework for communicating with industrial, commercial and civil organizations.