

JAIMA Holds Side Event on Environmental Goods Negotiations at WTO Headquarters

Seventeen countries and regions participated in the fifth round of negotiations on an Environmental Goods Agreement, held at the headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva on March 16-20, 2015. JAIMA held a luncheon seminar as a side event to this round.

The environment was proposed as a field for negotiations at the Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations which was launched in 2001, but negotiations on the Environmental Goods Agreement reached an impasse when that round stalled. In 2013, the venue for negotiations was shifted to the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Ministerial Meeting, and a consensus was reached on relaunching the negotiations on environmental goods. In January 2014, in Davos, Switzerland, a group of willing WTO members established the goal of lowering the priority rate of duty on environmental goods to 5% or less by the end of 2015, and announced that they would begin preparations for negotiating the liberalization of environmental goods.

The 14 willing countries and regions were Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Costa Rica.

The first round of negotiations on an Environmental Goods Agreement was held in July 2014, and this relaunch brought us to this fifth round.

In the fifth round, analytical equipment and measurement devices were proposed as targets of liberalization. To support this, the Japan Analytical Instruments Manufacturers' Association (JAIMA) successfully sponsored a luncheon seminar as a side event. It was co-sponsored by the Japan Electric Measuring Instruments Manufacturers' Association (JEMIMA) and supported by Spectaris in Germany and Ganbica in the UK. The master of ceremonies, presenters, and organizers of this side event had a chance to meet with Japan's Ambassador to the WTO Yoichi Otabe who expressed great appreciation for their efforts.

A schedule was set for holding the sixth round of talks in May, the seventh round in June, and the eighth round in July, and the parties set a goal of achieving an Environmental Goods Agreement by the time of the COP21, which is to be held in Paris in December 2015.