

Agreed Minutes of the Eighteenth (18th) Session of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between India and the Belgian Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU)

1. Opening Session and adoption of Agenda

The 18th session of the Joint Economic Commission (hereinafter, JEC) between India and the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) was held on 09th April, 2024 in New Delhi. This biennial meeting is held in pursuance of an agreement signed in March, 1990 in New Delhi, which laid out the contours of cooperation between India and BLEU in the field of economy, commerce and science & technology.

The JEC was co-chaired, on the Indian side, by Mr. Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and, on the BLEU side, by H.E. Mrs. Theodora Gentzis, President of the Board of the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and H.E. Mr. Jean Olinger, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Luxembourg. The Agenda for the JEC is attached at Annexure-I. The lists of Indian and BLEU delegates are attached at Annexure-II and Annexure-III, respectively.

1.1 The 18th session of the Commission was held in a productive and constructive atmosphere, reflecting shared commitment to bolster economic and trade relations. The JEC was held to take stock of the state of bilateral cooperation between India and the BLEU and to explore avenues for enhanced collaboration.

1.2 During the meeting, both sides approved the agenda and presented an overview of the bilateral trade & investment relations, sectoral cooperation, multilateral cooperation, and the potential for future cooperation.

2. Brief overview of Bilateral Trade & Investment Relations

2.1 The sides expressed satisfaction with the established strong bilateral relations complemented by robust trade and growing investment relations.

Merchandise Trade between India and the EU countries has demonstrated an upward trajectory. Over the past years, Belgium consistently ranks as one of India's significant trading partners within the European Union (EU). In 2023 as well, despite a slight decline in merchandise trade, Belgium continued to be one of India's largest trade partners in the EU. The decline can largely be attributed to a decline of trade in diamonds. However, the India-Belgian total trade in other sectors showed resilience,

remaining more or less at the same levels as in previous years. It proves once again that India-Belgian trade is promising and holds a solid base for further diversification.

India and Luxembourg acknowledged the notable uptrend in bilateral trade over recent years, underscoring the robust economic partnership and reaffirming their commitment to further enhancing trade relations for mutual benefit.

Both sides noted the trends in bilateral trade and recognized tremendous avenue for diversification and intensification of trade between the two countries.

2.2 The Indian side informed that India's liberal Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy has made it an attractive destination for investors, with most sectors allowing 100% FDI under the automatic route, barring a few strategically important sectors.

Belgium is the 20th largest FDI investor in India with cumulative FDI Equity inflows amounting to USD \$2.8 Bn for the period April 2000- Dec. 2023. Between FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 total FDI inflows from Belgium increased with over 5%. There are around 200 Belgian companies present in India and around 95 Indian companies operate in Belgium.

Belgium recognized that the momentum to strengthen its economic partnership with India is growing, while the number of Indo-Belgian partnerships in several strategic sectors is on the rise. Belgium, with its Commercial teams, including Flanders Investment and Trade, the Wallonia Export Invest Agency and Hub.Brussels, wants to build on the partnerships that exist and multiply them where possible. In that vein, Belgium announced the opening of a new Trade and Investment Office of Hub.Brussels in Mumbai and an economic mission to India to take place in March 2025, which will be led by HRH Princess Astrid. The mission is expected to bring a large number of Belgian companies to India to further stimulate bilateral trade and investment relations.

Belgium further highlighted that, earlier in the day it had organised, together with Invest India, a round table discussion with several key Belgian companies present in India which marked another milestone in strengthening bilateral ties.

FDI from Luxembourg to India stood at US\$ 4.7 Bn from April 2000 – December 2023, making it the 14th largest investor in India. In the steel sector, India and Luxembourg enjoy a longstanding cooperation. Notably, Luxembourg's Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel (AMNS) has been actively involved in upgrading India's steel industry for the past two decades, collaborating with major Indian steel players like Essar Steel.

The Luxembourg side recalled the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the bilateral relations between India and Luxembourg in 2023, and the 20th anniversary of the Luxembourg Embassy in New Delhi in 2022. It underlined that the growing trade relations over the last decade between India and Luxembourg are encouraging signs as evidenced by a substantive increase of trade and investments over the last decade. While financial services play a pivotal role in the bilateral trade, a diverse portfolio including machinery and base metals, chemicals, space and automotive complete the picture. In addition to Luxembourg's role in FDI, it also ranks as the 3rd largest source of Foreign Portfolio investments into India with cumulative FPI investment standing at INR 4.93 Bn (EUR 54.9 billion)¹. This significant investment volume underlines Luxembourg's active participation in India's stock and bond markets.

The Sides exchanged information on policy measures which may facilitate and strengthen the development of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The sides agreed to enhance cooperation and boost bilateral trade and investment in key thrust sectors to stimulate growth and enhance competitiveness.

3. Sectoral Cooperation

3.1 Logistics & Transportation

Indian side informed that the transportation and logistics sector in India is the backbone of the economy. The government has launched several policy initiatives, such as the PM GATI SHAKTI National Master Plan and the National Logistic Policy, aimed at enhancing effective planning and implementation.

Indian side mentioned that it is actively improving its logistics and transportation system by developing cutting-edge technologies for seamless stakeholder integration.

Indian side invited BLEU side to consider Investment opportunities in the areas of Cold chain Logistics, Warehousing- physical assets and services and Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) through Public Private Partnership mechanism or through Joint Ventures in Private sector.

Belgium highlighted that, it has a high degree of interdependence with its neighboring countries, the EU and the world. Thanks to its central geographical position at the heart Europe, Belgium serves as a gateway to Europe. The transport and logistics sector is a cornerstone of the Belgian economy. A staggering 80% of Europe's purchasing power lies within a radius of 800 km from Brussels. Belgium's excellent

¹ As per National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), India as of February 2024

performance in terms of transport and logistics is also related to the abundant transport infrastructure it offers, providing endless logistics and distribution options at the centre of Europe by road, rail, waterways or multimodal transport. In fact, the density of Belgium's transportation infrastructure by land, rail and water are among the highest in Europe and greatly contribute to the attractiveness of Belgium as a logistics gateway to Europe.

3.1.1 Air

The Sides underscored the importance of Air Transport being a priority area of bilateral cooperation.

Belgium informed the Indian side that Brussels Airport is in talks with Air India to restart direct flights as part of their expansion plans for Europe. Air India has not yet announced a timeline and is first awaiting the delivery of several new aircrafts.

Belgium also expressed an interest to strengthen cooperation with India in the area of airfreight transport and logistics. Brussels Airport and Liège Airport both serve as important air transport hubs on the European continent. Brussels Airport has over 50,000 m² of cold storage facilities – the most of any European airport. Liège Airport from its side is one of Europe's leading hubs for e-commerce related goods and for medical materials, having been selected by the World Health Organization and the World Food Program as one of their eight UN logistics hubs worldwide. The Challenge Group has recently established a scheduled route between Mumbai and Liège Airport, operating twice weekly.

Indian side took note of Belgium's strengths in Air Transport sector and indicated that the international operations of airlines are governed by the bilateral Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and the respective country.

Indian side conveyed that the enabling provisions for direct connectivity between India and Belgium for both passengers as well for all-cargo services are in place. However, the commencement of direct flight connectivity between India and Belgium depends on the commercial viability.

Luxembourg side took note of the discussions and appreciated the open skies arrangements in place for facilitating unrestricted cargo services between Luxembourg and India, exemplifying the strong regulatory foundation supporting air freight services and highlighting opportunities for future air cargo operations. At its peak in 2016, Luxembourg national cargo airline Cargolux exported 8,295 tons of goods from India and imported 5,564 tons into India, demonstrating the significant trade volumes handled and the vital role of air cargo in facilitating the trade between the two regions.

Still, as in other domains, Luxembourg considers the logistics market to be running below its potential.

3.1.2 Railways

The Belgian side apprised about the excellence of its railway technology and highlighted that the Walloon Region would be organizing an economic mission of Walloon Companies providing innovative products and services in the rail sector in April 2024 with visits to Delhi, Lucknow and Bengaluru.

The Indian side highlighted the significant strengths and promising opportunities in Indian Railways sectors. Indian Railways boasts one of the largest networks globally under single management and the largest passenger carrier and freight carrier. The projected investment for development of highspeed rail projects alongside new corridors is estimated to reach \$138 billion over the next decade.

The Indian side further informed that the Government has permitted 100% FDI in Railway Infrastructure as a significant policy measure to attract major Investment and the latest technologies.

Indian side welcomed Belgium & Luxembourg entities to invest in Indian Railways and contribute to the modernization and expansion of Indian Railways.

3.1.3 Ports

The Belgian side conveyed about the merger of the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge. The Port of Antwerp-Bruges (PoA) has become an important artery between many Indian port cities and Belgium, as India's gateway to Europe.

Indian side acknowledged Belgium's port infrastructure and the importance of smooth and swift trade access to Europe for Indian businesses through the Antwerp port.

Indian side informed that 100 % FDI is permitted in the shipping sector and plethora of opportunities available for the Belgium and Luxembourg companies to directly invest or form joint ventures in Ship building sector.

Belgium also highlighted that the Port of Antwerp's APEC Training Centre and Gujarat Maritime University in 2022 signed a MoU laying the collaborative foundation for the development and delivery of specialized courses for maritime professionals in India. The APEC Training Centre in 2022 also started training port officials from Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port (SMP) in Kolkata in night navigation, allowing SMP to start night navigation between Kolkata and Sagar Island. More recently, the PoA won a project with the Assam Inland Waterways Development Society – funded by the World

Bank – to develop a strategy towards a safe, inclusive, climate resilient, and green waterways transport network for improved and efficient cargo and passenger transport in the State. The PoA will execute the project in cooperation with two local consultants.

Belgium further highlighted the expertise of its dredgers, Jan De Nul and DEME. It mentioned that the DEME group signed an MoU with Jawahar Lal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) at the 2023 Global Maritime Summit for the development of Vadhvan Port in Maharashtra. In this regard, Indian side (JNPA) looks forward to continued cooperation with the Belgian side for the establishment of the same using latest technology and methodology for its construction as well as for operational phase.

Belgian side raised concerns on behalf of its dredging companies regarding the new SAROD Arbitration Rules, which reduced the pool of international and legally trained arbiters, as well as the new Integrity Pact which dredgers have to sign to participate in tenders. Belgium mentioned that it would follow up on this with the European Union and the competent Indian authorities.

3.2 Energy including Renewable Energy and Cleantech

The sides discussed the current state of relations concerning bilateral cooperation in the Renewable Energy sector and agreed to further intensify efforts to collaborate in the renewable energy sector.

The Indian side informed about the robust and investor friendly policies put in place for promoting renewable energy with up to 100% FDI permitted in the Renewable Energy sector.

Indian and Belgian side acknowledged the ongoing consultations for the renewal of the MoU in the field of Renewable Energy, for which Belgium has already given its final remarks in July 2023. Both sides expressed willingness for the early conclusion of the same.

Indian side highlighted that it has set a target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel based capacity by 2030. The target is expected to attract an investment of around USD 300 billion. India has also recently launched National Green Hydrogen Mission.

In this context, Indian side invited companies of Belgium and Luxembourg to participate in the establishment and development of Green Hydrogen ecosystem in the country.

Belgium mentioned that India's National Green Hydrogen Mission and Belgium's renewed Federal Hydrogen Strategy are in many ways complementary. Belgium's

natural gas pipeline network, connecting Zeebrugge Seaport with the European hinterland is being converted into a very first 'hydrogen highway'. Several other hydrogen projects are also under development in Belgium and are ready to be deployed in the coming years. These factors create room for closer cooperation with India. Several Indo-Belgian projects are already in motion. In that regard, Belgium referred to the joint venture that was set up between John Cockerill and India's Greenko Group. Together they are constructing Asia's largest hydrogen electrolyser manufacturing plant of 2GW in Kankinada, Andhra Pradesh. Belgium inquired about the possibility to expedite the environmental permitting processes to ensure a smoother project timeline.

Belgium also gave the example of the partnership between Technip Energies and John Cockerill. Together they're setting up a new company, Rely based in Noida, which will employ over 1500 workers to scale up green hydrogen and power-to-X solutions to decarbonize hard-to-abate industries in India. Other Belgian companies with expertise in the sector and a presence in India, such as Bekaert, Deme, Tractebel, and Umicore, are equally exploring opportunities within the Indian hydrogen market.

Belgium further mentioned that also in other segments of the renewable energy sector, the number of Belgo-Indian partnerships is on the rise. It gave the example of India's ReNew, who took a large participation in Belgium's 3E, a leading renewable energy AI and Software Company to make renewable energy sources more performant.

Belgium also highlighted its expertise in energy storage in general and the treatment of post lithium-ion battery management in particular. Several Belgian companies are rolling out energy storage capabilities and/or EV battery recycling capabilities in India or have relevant advanced technologies that can easily be made available on the Indian market e.g. Solvay, CE+T Power, Comet Traitements, Silox, Umicore, Prayon and John Cockerill.

The Belgian side informed the Indian side that it is the 4th largest producer of offshore wind energy worldwide despite having a coastline of only 67km. Belgium currently has a capacity of 2.3 GW offshore winds and plans to more than triple that in the next 15 years. Belgium mentioned it has a very performant ecosystem when it comes to offshore wind, through decades of investments and innovation in the sector. Flagship Belgian companies in (on- and) offshore wind energy, like DEME, Jan De Nul, Colruyt Group, Tractebel and Smulders are present in India and can help India achieve its wind energy ambitions, including those in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

Indian side took note of this and informed Belgium of its transparent bidding system and welcomed the Belgian side to participate in the bids issued for the allocation of seabed lease rights for 4000 MW offshore Wind Power Projects off the coast of Tamil Nadu for the development of offshore wind energy projects.

Indian side urged the Belgium side to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Framework Agreement to promote solar energy for addressing energy challenges. Belgium side acknowledged and informed that the decision to join ISA is still under consideration and suggested the Indian side – through its Embassy in Brussels – to follow up on the matter with the Flemish Government.

Indian side acknowledged the signing of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Framework Agreement by Luxembourg and urged Luxembourg to ratify the same to promote solar energy for addressing energy demands globally.

Luxembourg side reaffirmed their commitment for early ratification of the ISA Framework Agreement and noted that it also signed a joint initiative led by India and Sweden called Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT).

Luxembourg is pioneering in ecological and digital transitions, focusing on circular economy, sustainable construction and resilient value chains, underlined by a commitment to sustainability as evidenced by its top ranking on the European Commission's Eco-Innovation Scoreboard. The Circular Economy strategy, leveraging digital technologies for product longevity and circular business models, along with the Product Circularity Data Sheet (PCDS) initiative, showcase Luxembourg's innovative approaches to sustainability.

Luxembourg apprised the Indian side of their strengths to harness green hydrogen from waste and referred to Boson Energy, a Luxembourg based company's expertise in this field. The company has a vision for setting up of 200 plants across the Ganga River basin for harnessing hydrogen/sustainable products through advanced thermal treatment of waste.

Luxembourg side is open to explore partnerships with the Indian government and private sector to promote a green hydrogen ecosystem for sustainable development.

Lastly, Belgium mentioned that the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO) will co-organize the 7th G-STIC Conference to take place in Delhi in October 2024.

3.3 Industry

3.3.1 Diamond Trade

Both sides recognized that diamond trade plays a crucial role in the bilateral trade relations between India and Belgium.

Indian side raised concerns regarding the EU and G7 ban on imports of Russia-origin diamonds via third countries, which came into effect in early March 2024, and how it is a significant concern for Indian diamond Industry and trade.

Belgium mentioned that the G7 and EU have – following a direct ban on the import of Russian diamonds on the G7 markets on January 1st – introduced an indirect ban for Russian diamonds which entered into effect on the 1st March 2024. The indirect ban targets natural diamonds mined in Russia sized 1.0 carat and larger. Indian side responded that the proposed node in Antwerp is strongly opposed by Indian Diamond Industry. Industry is anxious about longer timeframes, procedural complexity, added costs and potential compromise on trade secrets and data. India is opposed to erecting such trade barriers anywhere in the world. In order to respect and comply with G7 sensitivities, India is willing to setup a node in India and can allow oversight by G7.

Belgium clarified that the objective of the ban is to reduce the revenue Russia earns from diamonds and to provide certainty to consumers in the G7/EU market that they are not purchasing Russian diamonds. To achieve this goal, the G7 has agreed to establish a robust traceability-based verification and certification mechanism which should be fully operational by September 1st 2024. This mechanism includes physical checks of all rough diamond shipments entering the G7/EU market at the Diamond Office in Antwerp. Belgium however clarified that it does not see this as an endpoint. Once the system has shown its efficiency and depending on the technological advance the G7 will further finetune the system.

Belgium informed Indian counterparts that a pilot project with a limited number of companies representing different parts of the supply chain was launched early March and includes an Indian diamond polishing company. The aim of the pilot project is to test the digital and logistical flows of the traceability system in order to further finetune the system in view of avoiding potential problems down the line.

Belgium reiterated that the goal is to avoid unintended negative consequences or unnecessary burdens on third countries, such as India, when developing the G7 mechanism. Belgium emphasised its point by highlighting that the decision to choose 0.5 carats as the lower limit for the scope of the sanctions stems from the desire to shield employment in India.

Lastly, Belgium informed that certain seizures by Belgian customs authorities of diamond shipments allegedly violating the import ban clearly demonstrate the risk for circumvention. Belgium expressed the view that it is the combination of traceability data and a physical inspection of diamonds upon entering the G7 market that provides the highest assurances.

Indian side conveyed that since the ban is on certain size, Indian side wanted that EU customs should issue clarification exempting diamonds below threshold size. Indian side suggested if EU customs could introduce uniform set of custom practice, language across EU and to give clear guidelines to their banks on necessary documents and procedures for releasing payments.

Indian side iterated that in case EU custom finds that full or partial goods do not comply with EU requirements, shipments should not be held, seized or detained under any circumstances. They should be released with appropriate remarks and returned to exporter from India.

Discussions on how to handle diamond stocks predating the import bans are ongoing within the G7 and the G7 technical working group is aware of the importance of this particular point for the Indian industry. Belgium encouraged the continued interaction between India and the G7 technical working group.

Belgium stated that it does not expect to see a big impact on employment in the Indian polishing industry, as Russian diamonds can still be sold to consumers in China, India and the Middle East. Belgium argued that, while the prices of Russian diamonds will likely go down further, prices of non-Russian diamonds are expected to go up. The market will likely rebalance, but no segment is expected to disappear completely. In the end, all available diamonds will still need polishing, mostly in India.

Indian side highlighted that as India is in the middle of the value chain of diamonds, the ban essentially poses challenges such as supply disruptions, price fluctuations, and need for new regulatory compliances, impacting market dynamics and potentially affecting employment in the industry as businesses adapt to these changes.

As the Industry's concerns are yet to be resolved by the G7 technical team, Indian side requested that it would be appropriate that G7/EU technical team engages with the Indian team to resolve these issues.

Belgian side reiterated that it continues to be ready to discuss these issues with India, including at technical level.

3.3.2 Steel and Trade in Engineering Goods

Indian side expressed concern on EU's safeguard measure on imports of certain steel products in the form of Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) on 26 steel products since July 2018. India held consultations with the EU in June 2020 and June 2021 to highlight industry concerns. Even after review in 2022 measure is still in place for about six years now.

In the review held with EU in June 2020, India also explored EU's position with respect to quota allocation at sub-category level i.e. 4B in product category 4. India stated that category 4A (Metallic Coated Non-Automotive Sheets i.e. Structural Steel) was typically exhausted much before the expiry of the quota period whereas India-specific quota for category 4B (Automotive Specialty Steel) remained largely unutilized.

Indian side urged the Belgium side to take up with the EU to revisit the specific quota and reconsider the matter.

BLEU side took note of Indian side's concerns and recommended India to follow up with EU in this regard.

Belgium from its side underlined the importance of the OECD Global Forum on Steel (GFSEC) and expressed the hope that India, as one of the largest manufacturers of steel, will continue its informal dialogue with individual members of the GFSEC and the OECD's steel committee.

Belgium also emphasized the need to link excess capacities to the need of decarbonizing the economy. It referred in this regard to Belgium's John Cockerill, a world leader in innovative technologies for steel: number 1 worldwide in the design of galvanizing lines and number 1 worldwide in the design of chemical surface treatment lines. Those technologies allow the achievement of "net zero" in steel production, which is essential for India to achieve its net zero goals.

Luxembourg noted that its companies were prominently engaged in India's industrial sector through the "Make in India" initiative, notably with ArcelorMittal-NipponSteel (AMNS), headquartered in Luxembourg, standing as one of the major foreign direct investors in Indian manufacturing, and expanding the operations of its Hazira plant, which is expected to become the world's largest single-location integrated steel plant by 2029, with a production capacity of 24 million tons of crude steel annually, according to the Executive chairman of ArcelorMittal S.A.. The acquisition of ESSAR Steel was also highlighted as a significant enhancement of Luxembourg's investment in India.

Other Luxembourg companies, such as Ceratizit, AMER-SIL Ketex, Rotarex, Tractel Secalt and HITEC are actively contributing to India's industrial framework, each adding specialized expertise and resources. Valve Competence Luxembourg (VCL) is opening an office in Gurgaon, responding effectively to Indian customers' demands. It was also noted that Calumite, a Luxembourg-based company embracing a circular economy solution, is opening a manufacture facility in Gujarat, aiming to serve the local glass manufacturing industry more efficiently.

Finally, Luxembourg pointed out that adopting Industry 4.0 solution in steel production presents a significant opportunity for future collaborations. This will involve the integration of automation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence to optimize processes.

3.3.3. Defence Manufacturing

Indian side informed that the Indian Defence Industry has opened up for private sector participation with up to 74% FDI allowed under the automatic route and up to 100% FDI under the government approval route. It highlighted that the ease of doing business measures like delicensing and deregulation in the Defense Sector makes 'Make in India' appealing to foreign manufacturers.

Belgium mentioned that John Cockerill Defence is working with L&T on the High Altitude Light tank (H.A.L.T.) program for the DRDO and has already delivered a 1st prototype. It has set up a local joint venture to bring additional technologies into India while developing its local supply chain to manufacture under the "Make-in-India" heading and make India more self-reliant. Similarly, the Belgian arm of the company Thalès, a supplier to India's armed forces, is currently busy developing a partnership to manufacture its 70mm rocket systems in India.

3.3.4 Audio-visual

Indian side desired to explore the possibility of greater collaboration between India and Belgium in audio-visual Industry, and recalled the discussion held in the last JEC and requested Belgium to engage in a MoU on audio-visual co-production.

In this regard, Indian side has shared a draft template on Audio-Visual Co-production agreement for consideration. The Belgian side mentioned that it would pass the draft template on to the competent Regional Authorities.

Belgium reiterated it remains interested in receiving Indian film crews, especially as far as Indo-Belgian co-production is concerned. Belgium offers a favourable tax system for audio-visual co-productions on its territory provided that there is a Belgian participation at technical and/or at artistic level.

3.4 Financial Services & Fintech

Luxembourg's side mentioned its track record as a global financial center, which is also the 2nd largest fund industry after the USA. Its expertise in areas such as private and corporate banking, investment funds, capital markets, insurance and reinsurance, as well as Fintech make it an ideal partner for India as it strives to modernize its economy and to embrace innovation.

The sides recognized that the relations in the field of financial services have strengthened over the past few years. The sides recognized the role of global financial institutions to achieve the targets of sustainable financing and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), and that Luxembourg accounts for more than 42% of ESG fund assets in Europe. As a global financial hub, Luxembourg can not only act as an entry gate to Europe for Indian financial institutions, but also act as a platform to attract European and international capital to India.

The Sides acknowledged the MoU/Cooperation agreements signed by Luxembourg Stock Exchange (LuxSE), a worldwide leader in the listing of international securities with Indian counterparts – State Bank of India (SBI) and the MoU between ~~INX~~ India International Exchange (India INX) and LuxSE for promoting ESG and Green Finance in the Indian market. Through this existing cooperation, Indian public sector enterprises, including the State Bank of India and the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) Ltd. have double listed green and sustainable bonds on India INX and LuxSE, worth USD 650 million and USD 300 million respectively. Furthermore, both sides acknowledged existing MoUs between Luxembourg's financial regulator CSSF and its Indian counterparts SEBI and IFSCA.

Indian side invited Luxembourg and Belgian regulators/banking institutions to invest in IFSC GIFT City in the fields of Banking and Insurance to provide services such as aircraft leasing and ship acquisition, leasing and financing.

BLEU side took note of the proposed areas on cooperation that can be explored in respect of IFSC GIFT City.

Indian side suggested that a Working Group may be constituted between Government of India, International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), Government of

Luxembourg, European Investment Bank (EIB) etc. to explore mutually beneficial areas of interest related to sustainable finance and transition finance.

Indian side raised the issue of acceptance/enabling use of the RuPay Cards and UPI in Europe. The Indian side emphasized its experience in the area of Digital Payments, focusing on RuPay cards and Unified Payments Interface (UPI). The Indian side proposed to the BLEU side, to consider developing interoperability with India by working with NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) to enable seamless Cross Border Remittance and Merchant Payments using UPI powered apps.

Belgium mentioned that BIO, the public Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries, recently decided to invest 10 million USD of senior secured debt in Terrapay, an Indian company providing financial digital payment infrastructure focussing on remittances from migrants in developed countries to relatives in developing countries.

Belgian global impact investor, Incofin Investment Management has invested 4 million euros in Varashakti Housing Finance Limited (VHF), a company from Chennai operating in the rural affordable housing finance market.

3.5 Digital Transformation & ICT

The sides noted the role of digital technologies for the progress of economy and stressed that there is a huge potential for cooperation in this sector.

Indian side suggested that India and Luxembourg may identify and develop new and sustainable cross-sectoral business opportunities for ICT companies and support ICT start-ups with strong motivation and high development potential. Indian side further suggested to support business development in targeted areas aligned with Luxembourg's priorities: cybersecurity, fintech, big data, the Internet of Things, high performance computing, artificial intelligence, blockchain, etc.

Indian side informed about the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Startup Hub initiative of promoting start-ups in technology innovation and invited Luxembourg start-ups to consider collaboration to tap the unutilized potential for cooperation.

Indian side invited Luxembourg side to submit research proposals under Joint Call for proposal for India-EU Cooperation on High Performance Computing.

Indian side mentioned that an MoU between India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Belgian's Competent Authorities was signed on 7th November 2017 in New Delhi that intends to develop a long-term and sustainable

cooperation, on the basis of equality and mutual Interest in the areas of ICT&E. The MoU expired in 2020.

The Belgian side mentioned that the renewal of the MoU could be considered, subject to substantial technical inputs from both sides. It highlighted that only one Joint Working Group has been organised since the MoU was signed and that there hasn't been a request for another session of the Joint Working Group from either side.

Belgium mentioned that the tech sector holds enormous potential to strengthen cooperation with India. An increasing number of Belgian companies are making use of India's IT-services – such as TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and HCL – or moving their entire global capability centers to India, such as AB InBev or Bekaert. The Colruyt Group has moved its entire IT division to Hyderabad, where it has more than doubled its operations in the last 3 years.

Belgium continued that India is also increasingly working with Belgian tech companies and making use of Belgian technology. Belgian blockchain company SettleMint, for example, has been assisting the Indian state of Jharkhand since 2022 in seed distribution by implementing blockchain technology. This collaboration aims to bring transparency and authenticity to the distribution process, ensuring that farmers receive quality seeds in a timely manner. Another example concerns Odoo, a software unicorn from Belgium providing SMEs with performant and easy-to-use office software. Odoo has chosen Ahmedabad as one of its worldwide development hubs, and its founder and CEO Fabien Pinckaers has temporarily moved to Ahmedabad last year to realize Odoo's ambitious plans for India.

Both sides also agreed to further explore opportunities for cooperation in semiconductors, including through Indian research institutes and the Interuniversity Microelectronics Centre (IMEC) in Belgium.

Lastly, Belgium highlighted initiatives of its Regions to stimulate Indo-Belgian cooperation in tech. The Walloon Region, for example, revived its COVID-paused Wallonia-Tech-India program last year to facilitate collaboration between Indian and Belgian tech start-ups and to ensure the soft landing of Indian tech start-ups on the European market. The Capital Region of Brussels from its side signed an MoU with the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) enabling bilateral exchange of startups and facilitating soft landing for Indian tech start ups in Brussels, including through the establishment of a 'Startup Infinity Centre' in Brussels, the second such centre of KSUM. Brussels is interested to develop similar initiatives with other Indian actors.

Luxembourg highlighted its emphasis on advancing in AI, cybersecurity, fintech, and quantum computing. It was also indicated that Luxembourg hosts Europe's highest density of Tier IV data centers and the strategic Meluxina high-performance computing asset. All those elements underscore Luxembourg's drive for data-driven economic growth and technological innovation.

Luxembourg also mentioned its start-up friendly environment, exemplified by initiatives like Fit4Start, Nexus 2050, and strategic collaborations with Indian tech companies. Luxembourg continues to foster innovation and to position itself as a gateway to European markets for global enterprises, particularly in emerging sectors.

Luxembourg noted that Ibisa, a Luxembourg-based insurtech startup, has developed and implemented satellite data-indexed insurance products, enrolling 25,000 farmers in India. The discussion underscored partnerships in states like Odisha, Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab, and collaborations with a Bengaluru-based dairytech startup, indicating significant growth potential in India.

Luxembourg mentioned that Artec 3D has been active in India for ten years, distributing its 3D scanning technology across various sectors, with future potential in Forensic Sciences, Healthcare and archaeology.

Luxembourg also pointed out the vital contributions of the Indian community, numbering over 4,600, primarily in the IT sector, which plays a crucial role in the bilateral technology exchange between Luxembourg and India.

Luxembourg is positioning itself as a hub for foreign companies, giving them access to the European market and offering them a test bed in terms of the size of its market, but also in terms of compliance with European legislation, while taking advantage of the good relations established between Luxembourg and its neighbouring countries.

3.6 Healthcare and Life Sciences

Belgium mentioned it is known for the density of its research and development ecosystem in life sciences. With a constellation of world-class universities and research institutions, pioneering biotech and pharmaceutical companies, like GSK, UCB, J&J, Pfizer or Novartis, Belgium has cemented its reputation as a fertile ground for cutting-edge medical advancements. It is the EU's second largest pharmaceuticals exporter and stands second in the EU in terms of clinical trials per inhabitant. In areas such as nuclear medicine, oncology or biopharmacy, several companies have already scaled up technologies developed in Belgium through key collaborative Indian partnerships.

Ion Beam Applications S.A. (IBA), for example, has opened several proton therapy units for cancer treatment in Indian governmental and private hospitals, including in the Tata Memorial Hospital in Navi Mumbai, and in the Apollo Proton Cancer Centre (APCC) in Chennai. IBA and APCC in 2022 also signed an agreement to offer proton therapy training and education for clinicians, making APCC Asia's first Proton Beam Training Institute.

Vermeiren, a major manufacturer of wheelchairs and other rehabilitation care equipment, through its manufacturing facility in Sri City, Chennai, currently produces over 18000 wheel chairs a month, of which a majority is exported. Vermeiren recently announced another expansion of their manufacturing facilities in India, worth 15 million euros. With the expansion Vermeiren will be able to produce a total of 45000 wheel chairs a month and 800-1000 nursing and home care beds.

Indian side informed that Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India has immense expertise in the Pharmaceutical sector especially in manufacturing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and the Key Starting Materials (KSMs). The BLEU side was requested to explore cooperation with CSIR in the activities related to manufacturing of APIs and KSMs for potential Technology and Knowledge partnership, on mutually agreeable terms.

Indian side requested identification of Belgium counterparts to pursue collaborative partnerships with CSIR, to further strengthen bilateral value chains in medical devices through JVs as many CSIR laboratories are already working in the area of medical devices.

The Indian side acknowledged the strengths of the Belgian side in vaccines and vaccine raw materials and suggested cooperation under the CSIR Mission project entitled "Development of mRNA platform for vaccines & biotherapeutics" for technology and know-how collaboration with interested Belgium and Luxembourg industries.

In this regard, Belgium informed about Quantoom, a spin off of Univercells, an innovation giant in biomanufacturing. Quantoom has developed the technology to produce reagents for mRNA vaccines at a 100th fraction of the price and has chosen India as its base to develop its mRNA production capabilities. They hope to start manufacturing and to sell mobile reagents labs in India in the coming months and are equally interested in R&D cooperation with India.

The Luxembourg side mentioned ongoing partnerships between Luxembourg and Indian institutions in life sciences, particularly in ground-breaking fields like

Parkinson's disease, biomedicine and bioinformatics that are instrumental in advancing shared knowledge and innovations in these fields. In this regard, the Luxembourg-German-Indian Alliance on Neurodegenerative Diseases and Therapeutics (Lux-GIANT) which is dedicated to studying Parkinson's disease within the Indian population was mentioned.

The Luxembourg House of Bio-health is fostering innovation within the healthtech sector, offering space for emerging start-ups to grow and thrive. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to position Luxembourg as a key player in health technology and bio-innovation, leveraging the country's infrastructure and supportive ecosystem to attract and cultivate high-potential ventures in this field. The House of Bio-health has capacity to welcome new healthtech start-ups.

Luxembourg is open to a wider scope of collaboration with India, especially in the fields of personalized healthcare and biomedicine, to continue leveraging international cooperation for achieving significant advancements in healthcare innovation and patient care.

3.7 Ayurveda & Traditional Medicine

Indian side informed that Ayurveda has been recognized in Switzerland, Hungary, and Romania and once again requested BLEU side to recognize Ayurveda practices, Ayurveda practitioners and Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia as a medicinal method. India-EU Technical Working Group on Ayurveda has been established to discuss AYUSH related issues in the EU. Two rounds of the meeting have been conducted.

Indian side expressed to explore the possibility for signing a country level MoU between Ministry of Ayush and Ministry of Health, Belgium for cooperation in the field of Traditional Medicine including Ayurveda & Yoga.

Indian side informed that a new category of AYUSH (AY) Visa has been created by the Government of India. It is specifically designed for foreign nationals looking to receive medical treatment in India through AYUSH or other traditional Indian systems of medicine and foreign nationals from Belgium, Luxembourg and other EU countries are welcome to use the facility.

Indian side conveyed that Bureau of Indian Standards, the National Standards Body of India has submitted a proposal to establish a Technical Committee dedicated to Ayurveda and Yoga in International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The proposal is currently undergoing internal review by the ISO Technical Management

Board (TMB) and is anticipated to be presented for member body voting in May 2024. Indian side requested BLEU side to support India's proposal through a positive vote.

The BLEU side took note of the proposal of Indian side; however, the Belgian side conveyed regulatory constraints in this regard.

3.8 Agro and Food Processing Industry

Indian side highlighted that the food processing sector has emerged as an important segment of the Indian economy and noted that food sector is also the second most important sector in the Belgian processing industry.

The Belgian side mentioned that several Belgian food and beverage companies are active in India and expanding their operations, subscribing to the Make-in-India policy. In that regard, Belgium highlighted that Agristo has opened up a factory in Bijnor, UP, producing mash potato flakes to serve the Indian and international market. Agristo is working together with local potato farmers to increase efficiency and achieve more qualitative and profitable harvests. At the same time Agristo is planning to expand its investment through a 6 billion INR Belgian fries line, which will open in 2026.

Indian side took note of Belgium's expertise and expressed interest for collaboration with Belgium side through joint research programmes for developing improved varieties of potato, and its processing and technologies for round the year supply of quality raw material for potato processing industries in India.

Barry Callebaut – a renowned Belgian chocolate producer – is currently building its third Indian chocolate and compound factory, located in Neemrana, Rajasthan, to serve the growing demand for high-quality chocolate in India. This brings their total investment in the past 5 years to over 4.6 billion INR. The factory is expected to open its doors later this year.

STAS – a market leader for designing and integrating packing and sorting turnkey solutions in the fresh produce industry – is another such example. While already active in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, they are now looking to expand their operations in Punjab, through a factory where they can assemble machines and by developing an apple tree orchard expecting to reach 8 hectares later this year.

3.9 Cooperation in Aerospace

Indian side highlighted its strengths in space exploration, research, and technology, and expressed its interest on expanding satellite launch capabilities, exploring new frontiers in space research, and fostering international collaborations.

Indian side informed that 100% FDI is allowed in space sector barring few areas. The liberalized entry routes under the amended policy are aimed to attract potential investors to invest in India in the space sector.

In alignment with Belgian Space Strategy, Indian side expressed interest to partner for co-development of cost competitive and high quality products and services for global market, particularly in mini satellites and hyper spectral satellite constellation building and downstream applications.

Indian side informed that IN-SPACE is in touch with the Luxembourg Space Agency, and conducted a virtual Space day with Luxembourg, under the "IN-SPACE Space Days" concept, to foster collaborations for Indian Space Sector.

Indian side expressed satisfaction with the conclusion of an MoU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in February 2022.

This MoU encompasses a wide spectrum of space-related activities including remote sensing, satellite communication, space science, and planetary exploration and marks a significant step in enhancing bilateral relations. The future collaborations outlined include remote sensing, satellite communication, space science, and planetary exploration. This partnership also extends to addressing space debris, enhancing spacecraft and ground system operations, and exploring practical applications of space technology. Furthermore, it emphasizes academic exchanges and flexible cooperation in emerging space fields.

Indian and Belgian sides welcomed the signing of a MoU between Space sciences, Technologies and Astrophysics Research (STAR) Institute, University of Liege, Belgium and Indian Institute of Space Technology in March 2024 to establish cooperation in research and teaching related to Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Belgium reminded about the new milestone- Indo-Belgian cooperation in astronomy and space reached in March 2023, with the inauguration of a new telescope at ARIES' site in Devasthal, a 4m liquid mirror telescope, the largest of its kind worldwide. It is the second Indo-Belgian telescope built at the site by Belgian company AMOS, where Belgian and Indian astronomers share observation time. Another AMOS-built telescope is due for inauguration at Mount Abu later this year.

Belgium also reminded about the fact that the Belgo-Indian Network for Astronomy & Astrophysics (BINA) reconvened in March 2023, for a 3rd time since it was first launched following PM Modi's visit to Belgium in 2016.

Belgium added that several Belgian companies and research institutes are working closely with Indian partners in the aerospace sector, including with ISRO on its space programme. Europe's largest satellite factory – the third largest in the world – is currently under construction in Charleroi, Belgium, and will produce over 500 satellites per year. This again presents many opportunities for cooperation with India.

Belgium's Safran Test Cells, is building a state-of-the-art engine maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility for CFM LEAP engines in Hyderabad. This facility is poised to be the largest MRO of its kind globally and the largest in India. TCR Group – a world leader in Ground Support Equipment at Airports – is also looking to expand their operations in India's air sector, leasing electric vehicles to Indian airports that will be partially made in India.

Indian side took note of Belgium's vibrant aerospace industry with thriving companies in the components and spares business and a thriving MRO ecosystem. Indian side highlighted creation of aerospace Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities in India as one of its focus areas and suggested Belgium to explore this area for collaboration.

Luxembourg extended warm congratulations to India for the successful execution of the "Chandrayaan-3" mission, marking India as the 4th country to successfully land on the moon, and for the successful launch of the "Aditya-L1" solar probe mission earlier this year. Luxembourg further welcomed India's new space policy, a major step forward in fostering innovation and global collaboration in the space sector.

Luxembourg mentioned the launch of a joint venture in February 2022 between Société Européenne des Satellites (SES), a Luxembourg-headquartered space company and leading satellite operator, with Reliance Jio named 'Jio Space Technology Ltd.' The aim of this venture is to deliver next-generation, high-performance, scalable, and affordable satellite-based broadband services across India, including remote areas. SES already provides satellite capacity to India via the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) using 5 geostationary satellites.

Luxembourg commended India for the successful virtual industry day event between the Luxembourg Space Agency (LSA) and InSpace in October 2023, fostering connections between space companies, signifying the robust interest and potential for deepening Luxembourg-India economic ties in the space sector.

3.10 Cooperation in Research & Innovation, Higher Education & Skill Development

3.10.1 CSIR, India proposed the JEC to consider developing an Industrial exchange program to be administered by the concerned authority/funding organizations of the countries, for providing Industrial exposure to researchers/experts in each other's research and technology institutions.

Belgium mentioned that it is the country with the highest Research and Development intensity in the EU according to Eurostat and expressed its wish to further stimulate joint research cooperation. Following the 4th call for proposals for networking activities launched by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO), the Indian Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT), eight networking projects have been selected for joint funding. [Belgium mentioned that BELSPO has released the agreed funds, and expressed that it looks forward for the release of the agreed funds by DBT at the earliest in order not to delay scheduled activities further.

3.10.2 CSIR, India expressed its interest to setup topical interactions in key industrial sectors of importance to India-Belgium-Luxembourg. These may include the main industries in Belgium: engineering and metal products, motor vehicle assembly, transportation equipment, scientific instruments, processed foods and beverages, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, base metals, textiles, glass, petroleum, waste, energy, leather, electronics and sensors, oceanography; as also others of globally/economically relevant sectors.

3.10.3 Indian side informed the BLEU side regarding Study in India (SII) Portal launched by Government of India in August 2023. It is a dedicated website that showcases the best of Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and is a one-stop solution for admission and visa applications for foreign students who wish to pursue their higher education in Indian Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

The Indian side recognized the collaboration among institutions in India, Belgium, and Luxembourg and expressed hope for further strengthening of this collaboration in the future. Luxembourg side expressed willingness to explore collaboration among higher education institutions for contributing towards the study of Parkinson's disease.

Belgium concurred about further strengthening collaboration between academic institutions. In that regard, the University of Antwerp and the National Law University, Delhi last October signed a MoU to reinforce their research collaboration and exchanges. In the same respect, Belgium's Thomas More University of Applied Sciences and the Europe India Centre for Business and Industry (EICBI) signed a partnership agreement in September last year aiming to increase awareness about

India among the Business Program Unit students and to encourage them to explore opportunities in India.

Indian side also called upon both the countries to explore feasibility of opening of campuses in the GIFT City, Gandhinagar.

Indian side expressed willingness to explore collaboration on Technical Training and Vocational Education (TVET) with Belgium in mutually beneficial sectors. India-Belgium may jointly develop curricula, conduct training of trainers and exchange programs for students and professionals in these sectors. Additionally, there is potential for providing digital access to TVET programs in each other's ecosystems.

Luxembourg commended the distribution of Indian students at the University of Luxembourg for the academic year 2023-2024, indicating a participation of 141 Indian students in Luxembourgish higher education, especially in Master's and PhD programmes.

4 Market Access Issues

4.1 Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

India raised the concern on EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) which has come into application since 1st October 2023 and will have a significant impact on exports of covered products (such as cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen).

It will have direct bearing on the market access opportunities of the covered products to the EU under the India-EU FTA. India argued that, since CBAM is in the nature of an additional tariff on Indian exports and raises the cost of compliance, a balanced FTA outcome will require that effective market access is not nullified or impaired.

Indian side highlighted that as Belgium and Luxembourg are an important voice in EU system, they can play a greater role in addressing the concerns of India by flagging it to EC for positive solution. Indian side stressed upon different target dates for Net Zero for EU (2050) and India (2070) and urged EU to exempt countries like India from CBAM which have target for achieving Net Zero by 2070.

India urged Belgium and Luxembourg to request EU to take pragmatic approach to address the CBAM and other sustainability related concerns of India.

On CBAM, Belgium responded that it is designed to complement the ever more stringent EU Emissions Trading System, with the objective of preventing carbon leakage, *i.e.* to avoid an increased demand for imports produced with higher levels of

emission outside the EU which would nullify domestic emissions reduction efforts. It continued that the EU is committed to working extensively with all its international partners to ensure the smooth implementation of the mechanism, to find synergies wherever possible, and to promote effective methods of decarbonization globally. The aim is to be as early as possible in a position where CBAM is no longer needed.

4.2 Deforestation Regulation

India expressed concerns on EU's Deforestation Regulation which has come into force on 29 June 2023, though the main prohibitions and obligations will apply after 30 December 2024.

The regulation put onerous due diligence obligations on the business operators of seven covered commodities such as Palm Oil, Soya, Wood, Cocoa, Coffee, Cattle, and Rubber and they need to collect and keep the information such as description of the product, quantity of the product, the country and place of production, details of supplier etc. for 5 years. The compliance requirement will have cost time and capacity challenges.

It will thus nullify and impair the market access that would be extended to India under India-EU Free Trade Agreement. India therefore urged BLEU side to play a greater role in addressing the concerns of India by flagging it to EC for positive solution.

Belgium responded by explaining that the Deforestation Regulation is an EU environmental measure, which complements multilateral action on deforestation and the protection of biodiversity. It has been developed in compliance with the EU's international commitments: WTO rules, international environmental agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals. Belgium continued that it will use partnerships and cooperation mechanisms to support countries to address deforestation and forest degradation where a specific need has been detected, and where there is a demand to cooperate. The EU and the Member States' support can be targeted to the areas where challenges are greatest, helping partner countries to focus their efforts, with the EU support.

4.3 Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS): certification of spare parts

Belgium side indicated that Belgium's IBA installed innovative proton therapy devices for cancer treatment in several Indian hospitals. However, sending spare parts to fix elements of installed proton therapy devices is difficult, considering that BIS currently requires the certification of individual spare parts needed to fix the already certified and installed proton therapy device in India. The certification process with BIS is lengthy and involves a high cost, making it difficult for IBA to fulfill their contractual

after-sales obligations to Indian hospitals. The Belgian side requested the Indian Government to have another look at this in order to facilitate the import of spare parts for already certified and installed health devices.

Indian side took note of the request of Belgian side and requested Belgium to provide the details of the specific product (spare part) for which the BIS certification requirement is applicable. A copy of the QCO may also be shared, so that the matter can be taken up with the concerned regulator.

4.4 Access for Belgian bell peppers and blue berries (PQ Order 2003)

Belgian side raised the issue of their exporters of bell peppers and blue berries who have applied to gain access to the Indian market. The procedure has been going on for almost 7 years. Belgian side informed that an on-site inspection visit that took place in Belgium in September 2022, after which a list of requested documents was sent to the Plant Protection Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Belgium side requested the Govt. of India to expedite the process or to agree on a proposal for a timeline on the possible outcome, in order to give exporters some clarity

Indian side took note of the Belgian side request and informed that the information submitted by Belgium is satisfactory and the same was conveyed to Belgium on 08.11.2023. Indian side further requested the Belgium side to send the signed OWP (Operational Work Plan) for counter signature by National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) India. Once OWP is signed, a notification will be processed.

4.5 FSSAI and Animal Husbandry: export of animals and animal products

Belgian side indicated that on the 18th August 2022, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a notification which included 3 new health certificates demanding additional food safety requirements for import of dairy, pork and fish food consignments. These additional requirements come on top of the already existing certificates required by the Department of Animal Health and Husbandry (DAHD). The Belgian side raised the concern regarding confusion at customs clearance with Indian importers and Belgium exporters, as two different certificates are needed. Belgian side requested the Indian side to indicate about the possibility of streamlining that process.

Indian side conveyed to the Belgium side that the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have developed an integrated health certificate to facilitate trade in milk and milk products, responding to requests from various trading partners. This certificate covers

the requirements of both DAHD and FSSAI and was officially introduced through a DAHD Notification dated 31.03.2023.

Indian side further informed that at present, the integrated health certificate for milk and milk products has been notified, and its implementation has been extended until 30.06.2024. During this transition period, either the previous certificate issued in 2019 by DAHD or the new integrated health certificate can be used and accepted.

Efforts are underway to integrate the health certificate for pork and fish products as well. Stakeholders will be given sufficient time to comply with these new requirements once they are finalized.

5 Bilateral Agreements and Procedures

5.1 India EU FTA

Indian side apprised that after Leaders announcement and formal launch of the negotiations in June 2022, seven rounds of FTA negotiations have been held till February, 2024 and 8th Round is being planned in June 2024 in Brussels.

It was acknowledged by sides that despite initial gap in respective positions in some areas, working with a spirit of mutual accommodation, both sides should be able to find the right balance for concluding the ongoing negotiations.

5.2 Update on Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)

The Sides discussed about the India-Belgium DTAA signed on 26.04.1993 that has been in force w.e.f. 01.10.1997 and an amending Protocol signed on 09.03.2017 is still awaiting ratification by the competent Belgium parliamentary bodies. The Belgian side mentioned that the accession procedures of the Federal Parliament, the Flemish Parliament and the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region have been completed. The accession procedures of the German-speaking Community, the French Community and the Walloon Region are on course. The competent Belgian authorities will do their utmost to complete the accession procedures of the competent parliamentary bodies as soon as possible.

5.3 Update on Social Security Arrangement

Indian side confirmed the operation of the Social Security Agreement between India and Belgium entered into force on 01.09.2009. It was conveyed that in the year 2021, India's Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) had provided logins to Belgian Officials to access the EPFO's International Workers Portal for database of

Certificate of Coverage (CoCs) issued under the SSA. They can also view the PDF copies of COCs issued.

Indian side indicated that the Belgian side is yet to provide online access to the COCs issued by Belgium. Indian side requested for online access to COCs issued by both Belgium and Luxembourg.

Belgium side indicated that while it does provide soft copy of the CoCs through email, giving access to the portal is currently technically and legally not possible. Belgium asked the Indian side to indicate whether it should send the CoCs to a different e-mail address.

6 Multilateral [WTO Issues]

The sides noted the conclusion of WTO MC 13 held in Abu Dhabi in February 2024. Belgium mentioned that only limited outcome could be achieved. All sides welcomed the continuation of the discussions and negotiations on the agenda of MC13 with a view to achieving negotiated outcomes in the coming months and years, and expressed their constructive approach towards these negotiations.

7 Consular Issues

All sides acknowledged that the Consular issues such as Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMP), Acceptance of Indian driving license and apostille issue with respect to Indians in Belgium would be addressed at the level of Foreign Office Consultations.

8 Any Other Business

The Belgian side raised concerns regarding payment issues faced by Sarens, a Belgian company specializing in crane rental services, with M/s Bridge & Roof, a Public company under the Ministry of Heavy Industries. Belgian side informed that all works carried out by Sarens were delivered as per the contract and their quality nor their timely delivery is under dispute. However, due to a funding issue at Bridge and Roof, Sarens is currently facing important payment delays for its delivered services, hampering further expansion of Sarens in India. A payment plan that was agreed between Sarens and Bridge & Roof is not being respected by the latter. Belgium side requested for resolution of the payment issue.

Indian side informed that in accordance with the settlement between M/s B&R and representatives from M/s. Sarens in August 2023, out of total outstanding payment of INR 248.2 Mn, INR 200 Mn has already been paid to M/s Sarens till February 2024

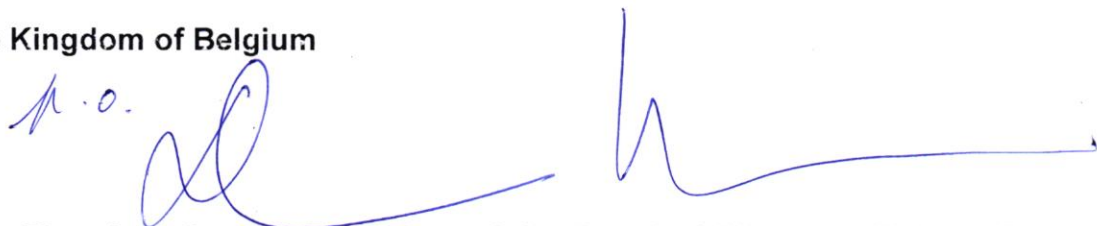
and M/s B&R is vigorously following up with its the client M/s HMEL for payment of outstanding INR 48.2 Mn. (security deposit).

9. Concluding Remarks

The Sides appreciated the constructive and insightful discussions held during JEC and agreed that the next session of Joint Economic Commission shall be held in Luxembourg in 2026 on a date that will be mutually agreed through diplomatic channels. The next JEC shall be preceded by a mid-term review in the course of 2025. They agreed to undertake follow-up actions on the subjects discussed during the current meeting.

Three identical copies of Joint Agreed Minutes were finalized following the 18th Session of the Joint Economic Commission between India and the Belgian Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU), of 09th April 2024.

For the Kingdom of Belgium



H.E. Ms Theodora Gentzis, President of the Board of Directors, Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

For the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg



H.E. Mr. Jean Olinger, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade

For the Republic of India

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sunil Barthwal', is positioned above the printed name.

**Mr. Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of
Commerce and Industry, Government of India**

18th Session of India and Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union

Joint Economic Commission

09th April 2024, New Delhi (03:00 PM – 05:00 PM (IST))

AGENDA

- 1. Opening Remarks and Adoption of Agenda by Co-chairs**Lead: IN/BE/LU
- 2. Brief Overview of Bilateral Trade & Investment Relations**Lead: BE/LU/IN
- 3. Sectoral Cooperation:**
 - 3.1 Logistics& Transportation**Lead: BE/LU/IN
 - Air
 - Railways
 - Ports
 - 3.2 Energy, including Renewable Energy and Cleantech**Lead: IN/BE/LU
 - 3.3 Industry**
 - Diamond TradeLead: BE/IN/LU
 - Steel and Trade in Engineering GoodsLead: LU/IN/BE
 - Defence ManufacturingLead: IN/BE/LU
 - Audio-visualLead: IN/BE
 - 3.4 Financial Services & Fintech**Lead: LU/IN/BE
 - 3.5 Digital Transformation& ICT**Lead: IN/BE/LU
 - 3.6 Healthcare and Life Sciences**Lead: BE/LU/IN
 - 3.7 Ayurveda & Traditional Medicine**Lead: IN/BE/LU
 - 3.8 Agro and Food Processing Industry**Lead: BE/IN/LU
 - 3.9 Cooperation in Aerospace**Lead: LU/BE/IN

3.10 Cooperation in Research& innovation, Higher Education and Skill
Development

Lead: LU/IN/BE

4. Market Access Issues

- CBAM
- Deforestation Regulation
- Belgium side issues(3)

Lead: IN/BE/LU

Lead: IN/BE/LU

Lead: BE/IN

5. Agreements and Procedures

Lead: IN/BE/LU

- India-EU FTA
- Update on Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)
- Update on Social Security Agreement

6. Multilateral Issues[Update on MC-13]

Lead: IN/BE/LU

7. Consular Issues

Lead: IN/BE/LU

8. Any Other Business

Lead: BE/IN/LU

9. Closing Remarks

Lead: BE/LU/IN

18th Session of India-Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union Joint Economic Commission

9th April 2024, 3-5 PM (IST)

List of Indian Delegation

1. Shri Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary – Co-chair
2. Shri Darpan Jain, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce
3. Dr C. Vanlalramsanga, Economic Advisor, Department of Commerce
4. Shri Balamurugan D, Joint Secretary, D/o Promotion of Ind. & Internal Trade
5. Ms. Bhawna Saxena, Joint Secretary, M/o AYUSH
6. Dr. Dipesh Shah, Executive Director, IFSCA
7. Shri R.S.Chaturvedi, ED(Infra), M/o Railways
8. Shri Ashwini Kumar, Economic Adviser, M/o Steel
9. Shri. Vikram Kesharee Pradhan, Director, M/o Food Processing Industries
10. Shri Venkatesapathy S., Director, M/o Shipping
11. Dr. Mohit Anand, Principal Scientist, Council for Scientific & Ind. Research
12. Shri R.Arulanandan, Director, Department of Commerce
13. Sh. P.K.Das, Scientist-E, M/o New & Renewable Energy
14. Shri Harikrishnan G, Officer on Special Duty, Department of Space
15. Shri Tusharanshu Sharma, Dy.Secretary, M/o External Affairs
16. Ms. Khayi Leishingam, Joint Director, Department of Pharmaceuticals
17. Shri Vijay Kumar, Joint Director, Department of Commerce
18. Shri Arunabha Ghosh, Scientist-D, M/o Electronics & IT
19. Shri Venkat Hariharan, Dy. Director, Department of Pharmaceuticals
20. Shri Pushpendra Kumar Sharma, Under Secretary, Department of Commerce
21. Ms. Ankita Chitkara, Consultant, Department of Commerce
22. Ms. Ankita Sharma, AVP, Invest India

18th Session of India-Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union Joint Economic Commission

9th April 2024, 3-5 PM (IST)

List of Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union Delegation

From Belgium

1. H.E. Ms. Theodora Gentzis, President of the Board (equivalent of Foreign Secretary) of the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.(Belgian Co-Chair)
2. H.E. Mr. Didier Vanderhasselt, Ambassador of Belgium to India
3. Mrs. Sabine Capart, Deputy Director Asia, Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
4. Mr. Timothy Synhaeve, Counsellor (Economic Affairs), Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium
5. Mrs. Paula Pupe, First Secretary, Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium
6. Mr. Guillaume de Bassompierre, Trade and Investment Commissioner, AWEX
7. Mr. Stefan Kessen, Customs Attaché, Belgian Ministry of Finance
8. Mrs. Neelam Khurana, Trade Advisor, Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT)

From Luxembourg

1. His Excellency Mr. Jean Olinger, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Luxembourg (Luxembourg Co-Chair)
2. Her Excellency Mrs. Peggy Frantzen, Ambassador of Luxembourg to India
3. H.E. Mrs. Véronique Dockendorf, Political Director, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Luxembourg
4. Mrs. Valerie Heyman, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Luxembourg in New Delhi
5. Mr. Steve Hoscheit, Counsellor, Embassy of Luxembourg in New Delhi
6. Mrs. Marya Kuderska, *Attachée*, Directorate of Foreign Trade and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Luxembourg