

**EU Commission concludes investigation on US internet gambling laws - Brussels, 26 March 2009**

**The European Commission has finalised its draft report following an investigation into United States measures affecting foreign suppliers of Internet gambling services. The investigation has found that US laws on remote gambling and their enforcement against EU companies constitute an obstacle to trade that is inconsistent with WTO rules. The provisional conclusions of the report imply that WTO proceedings against US measures would be justified. At the same time, the report indicates that the issue should be addressed with the US Administration, with a view to finding a negotiated solution. The report, completed in the framework of the EU Trade Barriers Regulation (TBR), will now be sent to EU member states for possible comments on the findings, and will be made public once finalised.**

EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton said: *"It is for the US to decide how best to regulate Internet gambling in its market, but this must be done in a way that fully respects WTO obligations. I am hopeful that we can find a swift, negotiated solution to this issue."*

The report released today to Member States is the result of a formal examination procedure initiated on 11 March 2008, following a complaint lodged by the Remote Gambling Association (RGA). The report concludes that US laws deny access and discriminate against foreign suppliers of gambling and betting services inconsistently with US WTO obligations.

European companies are still now subject to legal proceedings by US authorities based on their past activities on the US online gambling and betting market. The proceedings are continuing despite the withdrawal of European companies from the US market in 2006 following changes in the US regulatory framework. The report comes to the conclusion that these proceedings are legally not justified and discriminatory.

This investigation takes account of the fact that the EU and the US agreed in December 2007 a compensation package in exchange of the loss of trade opportunities as a result of the US intention to withdraw its WTO commitments on gambling and betting services. Once this withdrawal occurs, the US would no longer be obliged to guarantee future access to its gambling and betting market, but this does not mean that it could disregard its obligations in respect of past trade.

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