

CHAPTER 15

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

ARTICLE 15.1

Objectives

1. The Parties acknowledge the importance of an effective corporate governance framework to achieve economic growth through well-functioning markets and sound financial systems based on transparency, efficiency, trust and integrity.
2. Each Party shall take appropriate measures to develop an effective corporate governance framework within its territory, recognising that those measures will attract and encourage investment by enhancing investor confidence and improving competitiveness, thus enabling best advantage to be taken of the opportunities granted by its respective market access commitments.
3. Without limiting the ability of each Party to develop its own legal, institutional and regulatory framework in relation to the corporate governance of publicly listed companies, the Parties commit to respect the principles and adhere to the provisions of this Chapter to the extent that they facilitate access to each other's markets as provided for in this Agreement.
4. The Parties shall cooperate on matters relating to the development of an effective corporate governance framework which fall within the scope of this Chapter.

ARTICLE 15.2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Chapter:

- (a) 'board' means the governing body of a publicly listed company with a decision-making authority on the oversight of the operations of the company, whose members (directors) are elected, normally by the shareholders of the company, to govern the company;
- (b) 'corporate governance' means the set of relationships between a company's management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders; it also provides the structure through which a company is managed and controlled, notably by determining how the objectives of the company are set and the means of attaining those objectives, as well as by monitoring performance;
- (c) 'corporate governance framework' of a Party means the principles and rules of a binding or non-binding nature regarding the corporate governance of publicly listed companies, as applicable according to the competences and legislation of that Party; and
- (d) 'publicly listed company' means a legal person whose shares are listed or quoted for public trading on a stock market or regulated market of a Party as defined in the legislation of that Party.

ARTICLE 15.3

General principles

1. The Parties recognise the importance of the role of the corporate governance framework in providing timely and accurate disclosure on all material matters regarding publicly listed companies within their respective jurisdictions, including the financial situation, performance, ownership and governance of those companies.
2. The Parties also recognise the importance of the role of the corporate governance framework in providing appropriate accountability of the management and the board towards the shareholders, responsible board decision-making based on an independent and objective standpoint, and equal treatment of shareholders of the same class.

3. For greater certainty, the provisions of the corporate governance framework of a Party referred to in Articles 15.4 and 15.5 may be implemented either through legally binding mechanisms or through non-binding means such as on a comply or explain basis.

4. A Party may provide that some corporate governance principles or rules do not apply to certain companies ⁽¹⁾ in cases justified by objective and non-discriminatory criteria such as early phase of development or size of the company.

ARTICLE 15.4

Rights of shareholders and ownership functions

1. The corporate governance framework of each Party shall include provisions aiming at protecting and facilitating the effective exercise of shareholders' rights in publicly listed companies. Those rights include, where applicable, participation and voting in the general meeting as well as election and removal of members of the board in accordance with the corporate governance structure of the company with a view to allowing shareholders to oversee board behaviour ⁽²⁾ and participate in important decision-making of the company.

2. The corporate governance framework of each Party shall include provisions aiming at encouraging disclosure of information regarding the control of a company which can be valuable and useful to investors. That information includes, for instance, the capital structure, with an indication of the different classes of shares where appropriate, direct and indirect shareholdings which are considered to be significant, and special control rights.

ARTICLE 15.5

Roles of the board

The corporate governance framework of each Party shall include provisions aiming at the following, so that such framework will promote responsible board decision-making:

- (a) the effective monitoring of management by the board from an independent and objective standpoint, which can be achieved, for instance, through the effective use of a sufficient number of independent directors ⁽³⁾;
- (b) ensuring board accountability to the shareholders; and
- (c) ensuring sufficient disclosure of information relevant to investors, for instance with respect to board composition, board committees and independence of directors.

ARTICLE 15.6

Takeovers

Each Party shall provide rules and procedures governing takeovers in publicly listed companies. Such rules and procedures shall aim at enabling those transactions to occur at transparent prices and under fair conditions.

ARTICLE 15.7

Dispute settlement

The provisions of this Chapter shall not be subject to dispute settlement under Chapter 21.

⁽¹⁾ Companies listed outside regulated market are examples of companies that the European Union may exclude from the application of some corporate governance principles and rules.

⁽²⁾ For greater certainty, 'to oversee board behaviour' does not require the daily oversight of the board's operation by the shareholders.

⁽³⁾ Each Party may determine in its jurisdiction what constitutes a 'sufficient number of independent directors' in either qualitative or quantitative terms.