

EU delays ratifying US trade deal after tariffs are ruled illegal

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The EU has delayed ratification of its trade deal with the US after the Supreme Court ruled the tariffs introduced by Donald Trump's administration were illegal.

The European parliament's trade committee yesterday paused work on ratifying the agreement, struck last year between the US president and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, until there was more legal clarity about the tariffs.

Under the deal reached in Turnberry, Scotland, last year, a 15 per cent rate applied on most EU exports, while the bloc agreed to slash its levies on US industrial goods and some agricultural products to as low as zero.

But after the Supreme Court last week deemed Trump's levies illegal he hastily introduced a 15 per cent global tariff using a different law.

Bernd Lange, chair of the EU parliament's trade committee, said the "tariff chaos" meant there was no option but to delay ratification. "We want to have clarity from the US. We want to have stability. It is specifically important for investment."

A majority of parties backed the delay. "We will not be able to vote on the Turnberry Agreement until we have full clarity on how the Supreme Court's ruling affects the tariff arrangement," said Karin Karlsbro of the Liberal Renew group. "The US must get its trade policy in order; this level of chaos is not serious."

Željana Zovko, lead negotiator for the centre-right European People's party, said the delay should be temporary. "Our responsibility now is to uphold our commitments, ensure legal robustness and bring this agreement to a swift and responsible conclusion. Any further delay would undermine our credibility and send the wrong signal to our transatlantic partners."

When added to pre-existing "most favoured nation" levels, EU exports would be paying, on average, 15.8 per cent in tariffs, according to analysis by Global Trade Alert, an independent trade monitoring body.

Some industries, such as aircraft parts and pharmaceuticals, were exempted, but several products that the US agreed to leave tariff-free in the Turnberry deal now face levies. "The US needs to tell us precisely what is going on," said European Commission trade spokesman Olof Gill.

"Our intention is to honour and continue implementing the aspects of the agreement we made with the US on our side. And by the same token, we expect them to be able to tell us precisely what is happening in order that they can continue implementing their side of the agreement," Gill said.

Trade commissioner Maroš Šefčovič was set to brief member state ambassadors on the situation late yesterday.