

# India, European Union should set ‘realistic goals’ for trade

Vidya Ram, London, 19 December 2014

## **Opening up of goods and services sector will be the key: European Parliament Member**

India and the European Union should set themselves “realistic goals” for a future trade agreement, Geoffrey Van Orden, head of the European Parliament’s delegation on relations with India, said.

In an interview with *BusinessLine*, Van Orden, said he remained optimistic that a trade accord — which has been on the cards for nearly a decade — could move forward, if both sides were willing to give each other a clear signal. “Each side seems to be holding back — India has had elections and a change of government and at the EU we’ve had a new Commission and new Parliament but now there is no excuse not to get moving forward on this,” Orden said.

Orden, a member of the European Parliament representing Britain’s Conservative Party, took over as chair of the delegation in October, and set economic relations and trade agreement as the priority for his group over the parliamentary term. “I have a great deal of admiration and respect for [Prime Minister] Modi. It seems to me he is a man we can do business with and we’ve got to seize that opportunity. I hope that we can do our bit to move the relationship forward.” He hopes an EU-India summit could be held early next year which he believes will be crucial to breaking the impasse.

“I would prefer that we set realistic goals that we can achieve — if we set the bar too high we will all be disappointed so let us try and find areas which will be to the mutual benefit and targets that are achievable.”

Among the “realistic goals” would be opening up of the service sector in India, Orden said. “There will have to be a bit of a dis-equilibrium in favour of India but not to the extent that it is there now.” He added that opening up of goods and services, such as the auto sector, would also be the key. “There is an enormous disparity where India benefits colossally,” he said.

“There is a lot to be done to the mutual benefit — It’s not the question of slicing up a small pie. It’s a growing pie and there is an opportunity for everybody to the benefit of all Indian people.”

While the new government is yet to set out its policy on a trade agreement with Europe, the EU has been pushing forward with a trans-Atlantic trade and investment partnership with the US, though European Commission officials have insisted they remain equally committed to reaching a deal with India.

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