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Title	<i>European businesses call for broad economic talks with Japan</i>

European business leaders in Japan Monday called on the European Commission and the Japanese government to begin talks on a broad economic agreement spanning trade, investment and other issues.

The European Business Council in Japan said in a statement the two sides should begin preliminary talks on issues such as regulatory convergence, climate change and energy security, in addition to trade and investment.

“Given the rapidly changing global circumstances, we believe that inaction on the part of Europe at this stage could compromise not only its current bilateral dialogue with Japan, but also its global trade position for the foreseeable future,” the council warned.

It said broad discussions might help to ease the European Commission's reluctance to consider a bilateral deal that might overlap with the World Trade Organisation's stalled global free trade negotiations.

Japan was initially slow to pursue bilateral free trade deals but has recently been seeking a larger number of agreements, mostly within Asia.

It has previously said an agreement with the European Union would be difficult in light of sensitivities linked to agriculture, leaving its neighbour South Korea to take a lead in trade negotiations with the EU.

The council represents more than 3,000 European companies and individuals in who belong to European national chambers of commerce and business associations in Japan.

The call comes ahead of a summit between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso in Germany on Tuesday.