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Japan comes up with an idea to rescue the TPPA - trim members

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When Donald Trump was elected president, the US waved goodbye to the TPPA.

The ambitious trans-Pacific trade plan scuppered after the United States withdrew under its new president could be salvaged under a deal suggested by Japan.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) could be created with at least five nations on board, including New Zealand, Japan and Australia, instead of 12, sources involved in the negotiations told Kyodo News.

The TPPA was signed in February 2016 by Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

The involvement of the United States in the trade zone was a drawcard for the other countries, and the exit of the world's largest economy after Donald Trump was elected effectively killed the original plan.

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However, at a meeting of top negotiators from the 11 parties, Tokyo pushed the argument for a TPPA without the US by changing the original agreement, the sources said.

EMMA DANGERFIELD/FAIRFAX NZ

The TPPA agreement sparked protests at home and around the world.

To succeed, the TPPA needed ratification by countries which accounted for 85 per cent of the trade bloc's combined gross domestic product. Removing the US, which represented over 60 per cent of its GDP, made it unlikely the deal would survive.

Some countries, including Vietnam and Malaysia, were believed to have expressed reluctance about a TPPA without the US, and Chile and Peru are also not believed to be interested.

Canada and Mexico were noncommittal ahead of renegotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement with the US, the sources said.

14

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