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# PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament*

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## **Thirty-first session of the Steering Committee**

*11-12 February 2014*

*European Parliament, Brussels*

### **DECLARATION**

The Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO reiterates its support for the successful outcome of the 9<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (MC9), which took place in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 6 December 2013. The Bali package, composed of three pillars dealing with agriculture, development and trade facilitation respectively, gives a much-needed boost to the credibility of the WTO and the multilateral trading system as a whole. It represents an important step towards the conclusion of the Doha Development Round.

The year 2014 will be crucial for ensuring that WTO Members first implement what was agreed in Bali and then focus on further progress on core Doha Round issues. We urge the negotiators to devise before the end of the year a balanced and feasible work programme capitalizing on the momentum gathered at MC9. The timely implementation of the trade facilitation agreement concluded at MC9 is a priority. We welcome the commitment expressed by some Trade Ministers in January 2014 to build promptly on what was agreed at MC9, especially regarding issues of particular importance to the least developed countries.

We recognize that, while plurilateral agreements may complement the multilateral approach, the centrality of the latter must prevail in order for the needs of all WTO Members to be taken into account and for further deals to be balanced and receive the broadest possible support. We support the initiative of the "Friends of Green Goods", who have called for a plurilateral agreement on green goods to be negotiated within the WTO framework on the most-favoured-nation (MFN) basis, but wish to emphasize that this agreement should be comprehensive and ambitious, whilst not hindering a balanced outcome on non-agricultural market access (NAMA) within the Doha Development Agenda.

In addition to the focus on negotiations, we welcome the increasing importance attached to the resolution of disputes. The WTO dispute settlement system is widely credited as a very effective way of ensuring that the differences regarding interpretation of and compliance with WTO rights and obligations can be brought before independent adjudicators. The system, which encourages dialogue and consultation between parties as a first step towards compliance, is open to all WTO Members. To help developing countries fully benefit from the dispute-settlement mechanism, we call for greater and more targeted technical assistance to be provided to them.

We emphasize once again the need for a strong and effective parliamentary dimension of the WTO as a means of garnering and maintaining public support for open trade and of enhancing the transparency of the organization. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in relaying the concerns of the citizens to international trade negotiators. To this end, legislators should be able to effectively scrutinize international trade policy and its implementation. Access to timely information is crucial, as is the possibility for parliamentarians to be represented at international trade-related events.