
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

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

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STATEMENT

We welcome the theme of this year's WTO Public Forum, *Inclusive Trade*. It is an opportunity to discuss how everyone - men and women - and businesses can participate in the trading system, and how WTO rules can help to ensure that everyone benefits from trade. Today, the business environment is changing, anti-globalization sentiments are on the rise and world growth is slowing. It is therefore important to ensure that trade is truly inclusive, and that it allows developing countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs), small enterprises, women and innovative businesses to play an active role in the global trading system.

We would also like to express our support for policies that encourage firms of all sizes, to take full advantage of global value chains, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, and companies led by women and young entrepreneurs. Equally, we support policies that harness development work in order to encourage greater participation, value addition and upward mobility in global value chains, particularly in developing and least developed countries.

As legislators with particular responsibilities in the field of trade we call for representatives of all WTO members to make trade inclusive. We welcome the fact that the WTO is discussing these topics and a wide range of other issues, all of which follow on from last year's Ministerial Conference in Nairobi. However, we reiterate how important it is that the WTO deliver on its commitments and take into account the aspirations of all its stakeholders. Members should be looking to move from reflection to action towards the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda and implementation of the Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Decisions as a matter of priority. They should be making pragmatic, realistic and creative proposals that will properly prepare for the next WTO Ministerial Conference in 2017, which should take place in Latin America. Recognizing the increasing importance of trade in services, we call for a similar Trade Facilitation Agreement in Services, which will go a long way towards addressing the issues faced by services trade.

We extend a warm welcome to Afghanistan as the 164th member of the WTO. It acceded to the Organization on 29 July 2016 after nearly 12 years of negotiation and is the ninth least developed country to join the WTO. We congratulate Afghanistan on this achievement, particularly given the very challenging circumstances the country is facing.

Afghanistan has also ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement. It is positive that the speed of ratification has now picked up. The Agreement will enter into force after being ratified by two thirds of the WTO membership. To date, 94 members have ratified, which is nearly 85 per cent of the two-thirds requirement. We urge all WTO members that have not yet done so to speed up their ratification procedures and make the necessary implementation arrangements. That will allow all members to reap the benefits of the Agreement as soon as possible.

Recognizing the importance of inclusive trade for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all members of the WTO, we should take into account the urgency for the WTO to encourage governments to work closely with parliaments in formulating trade policies.