
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Geneva, 17-18 February 2003

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

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Debate on substantive themes:

The Parliamentary Conference on the WTO is taking place as governments address the Doha Development Agenda adopted in November 2001 and prepare for the Fifth Ministerial Conference, to be held in September 2003 in Cancun. In Doha, ministers reaffirmed the principles and objectives of the multilateral trading system and recognized the need for all peoples to benefit from the greater opportunities and welfare gains that the system generates. By launching the Doha Development Agenda, they agreed to place the needs and interests of developing countries at the heart of the work programme. They also acknowledged the need for improved market access, balanced rules, and well targeted, sustainably financed technical assistance and capacity-building programmes.

(a) Access to markets

This item focuses on the key issue of market access. There remain many barriers to international trade in goods and services. In certain sectors, tariff and non-tariff barriers still severely limit market access both for developed and developing countries. Conference participants are invited to discuss how to secure better market access through the Doha process, in particular the role of parliaments in providing momentum for the process.

(b) Development dimension of the multilateral trading system

Market access is one key element of the current negotiations. But more must be done to ensure a truly 'developmental' dimension to the Doha Development Agenda. Under this item, participants are invited to discuss other areas of the Doha work programme, such as progress in implementation, special and differential treatment, and targeted assistance for least developed countries.

Panel discussion: The need for a coherent policy framework of technical assistance and capacity-building

Technical assistance and capacity-building programmes are vital for advancing the Doha Development Agenda. During this interactive panel discussion, involving representatives from WTO, European Commission, World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNIDO and ITC, participants will be updated on the WTO's technical assistance activities that are designed to improve countries' capacity for trade negotiations. However, the training requirements of developing countries in this field extend well beyond the capacity for trade negotiations, and the panel will look at ways in which various international agencies can provide broader and more coordinated assistance. The panel will discuss ways to map out a single strategy in response to the various agendas from Doha (trade negotiations), Monterrey (financing for development), and Johannesburg (sustainable development), and to maximise the contribution of the three processes to the goals established by Heads of State in the Millennium Declaration.

(c) Options for a parliamentary dimension of the WTO

Discussion of a parliamentary dimension of the WTO, which was initiated by parliamentarians attending the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle and reaffirmed in Doha, has advanced considerably since the early days. The objective of the discussions will be to devise a common approach and lay down a solid foundation for a dialogue of legislators for the WTO.

3. Adoption of the Final Declaration

At the end of Conference, the participants will be called on to adopt a Final Declaration, the draft of which will be prepared by the Post-Doha Steering Committee.