
ANNUAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Geneva, 1-2 December 2006

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

ANNOTED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Dialogue with Ministers and senior WTO Officials

The 2006 annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO will be taking place at a time when, in accordance with the initial agreement, the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations should come to its conclusion. However, the gaps in positions of WTO Members on key questions remain wide, jeopardizing the outcome of negotiations. Participants in the parliamentary session will be able to receive first-hand information on latest developments in the WTO talks, exchange views with top negotiators and put forward their suggestions for possible ways forward.

3. Debate on substantive themes:

(a) Lessons to be learnt from the history of multilateral trade negotiations under WTO auspices

Conference delegates are invited to focus, from a parliamentary perspective, on lessons to be drawn from the past and present of the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its centre. Special attention is to be devoted to the issue of parliamentary oversight of trade negotiations.

(b) Multilateralism and bilateralism in trade policy

Regional and bilateral trade agreements have become so widespread that all but one WTO Member are said to be parties to one or more of them. It is estimated that over half of world trade is now conducted under regional agreements and bilateral free trade agreements between countries that are not in the same region. Under this agenda item, Conference delegates will be invited to discuss the consequences of this trend for the global multilateral trading system with WTO at its centre, and to exchange views on the role played by parliaments in overseeing government action in respect of regional and bilateral trade agreements.

4. Panel discussions

(a) Should agriculture be withdrawn from the single undertaking?

The focus of this interactive session will be on reasons for the stalemate in agriculture talks and on a possible way forward, bearing in mind broader implications of these negotiations for the future of the multilateral trading system. The debate should also cover the issue of responsibility of parliaments vis-à-vis demands by pressure groups to withdraw agriculture from WTO talks completely.

(b) How effective is the WTO dispute-settlement system?

The debate should focus on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the WTO dispute-settlement system, on whether a sustained suspension of the Doha Round is likely to lead to an increase in the number of conflicts referred to WTO dispute-settlement bodies, and on whether the resources of the existing system are suited for such a scenario. Of special interest is the question of whether parliaments should seek to play a greater role in the oversight of WTO litigation process, including the implementation of relevant decisions through national remedial action.

5. Adoption of the outcome document

At the end of the session, the participants will be invited to consider and adopt an outcome document, the draft of which will be prepared by the Conference Steering Committee.