
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

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

MESSAGE TO THE EIGHTH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

1. As legislators, with the responsibility to provide effective oversight of WTO negotiations, we are convinced that multilateralism remains the best option to harness globalization and manage interdependence. International trade is a powerful engine that sustains economic growth and development, while the very existence of WTO disciplines, rules and binding mechanisms plays a crucial role in diminishing the threat of protectionism.

2. During this year's session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (Geneva, 21-22 March 2011) as well as at the Parliamentary Panel held within the framework of the annual WTO Public Forum (Geneva, 20 September 2011), we restated our commitment to the universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and fair multilateral trading system as embodied by the WTO. In our view, the road to fairer and more equitable international trade will be vastly facilitated with the conclusion of the Doha Round. We therefore call on all parties to show greater flexibility and make the necessary breakthroughs to enable a successful outcome of the Round.

3. On the occasion of the eighth WTO Ministerial Conference, we reiterate our shared sense of urgency concerning the Doha Round negotiations and call on all parties - both developed and developing countries - to show greater leadership and flexibility, and to finally bring the negotiations to a close. We regret that it will not be possible to reach an agreement on the outstanding issues under the Doha Development Agenda at the Ministerial Conference, but stress the importance of a clear roadmap for the future negotiations. Furthermore, we firmly believe that the Ministerial Conference should still strive to deliver some tangible results.

4. The needs and interests of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, are, and should remain, at the heart of the Doha Development Agenda, which seeks to redress asymmetries and imbalances affecting them. We call upon developed countries that have not yet done so to provide immediate, predictable, duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from the least developed countries. Developing economies that are sufficiently advanced to do so, or declare themselves in a position to do so, should also contribute to this process.

5. We are convinced of the need to improve the functioning of the WTO as a negotiating forum. We therefore deem it necessary to rethink its processes and decision-making structures. We encourage WTO Members to give thorough consideration to relevant ideas and proposals, and to seek a general consensus on ways to do this. This should be done in order to strengthen the democratic nature and legitimacy of the system, in particular for Members with less economic might.

6. We believe that the WTO needs a strong and effective parliamentary dimension: the days when trade policy was the exclusive preserve of the executive branch are over. We welcome therefore the fact that, for the first time ever, the annual 2011 session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO took place on the premises of the WTO. As elected representatives of the people, we undertake to continue supporting the WTO, making sure that the multilateral trading system contributes to sustainable development for all.