

**ANNUAL 2012 SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE  
ON THE WTO IN GENEVA (15-16 NOVEMBER 2012)**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Speech by**

**Ambassador Shahid Bashir (Pakistan),  
Chairperson of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body**

Vice President of the European Parliament,  
Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Executive Committee, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am both pleased and honoured to be here with you today in the inaugural ceremony of the annual session of the Parliamentary Conference. I also thank the Secretary General IPU for extending invitation to me to address this august gathering of over 300 Parliamentarians and Government representatives from all over the world.

2. The previous conference was hosted by the WTO in March 2011. I intend to initially talk about the developments since then. As you are aware, at that time, Members of the WTO were fully engaged on all issues of the Doha mandate in a Chair-led process to develop clarity about the gaps of perception amongst the Members to find a way forward. In about a month thereafter, before Easter of 2011, all the Chairs tabled their reports, which were compiled into one set of document for the first time since the launch of the Round. It was witnessed that in many areas, especially in the area of market access, the gaps were unbridgeable at that time. Consensus was that business as usual was not an option. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial was just round the corner, the option was to make efforts to define and deliver a small package in the Ministerial. Major emphasis was placed

on the development dimension of the Round as an early harvest. There were differences amongst the Members on the contours of the package and no consensus could be found. It was decided that instead of a formal communiqué after the Ministerial, the Chairman would issue a statement in two parts. The first part based on the consensus of the Members and the second part under his own responsibility.

3. During the Ministerial, Members fully recognized the importance of multilateral trading system and reaffirmed that development was the core element of the WTO's work. Simultaneously, impasse in negotiations to complete the Doha Agenda was also recognized and the Ministers directed the delegations to fully explore different negotiating approaches while respecting the principles of transparency and inclusiveness. The Ministers also stressed to intensify efforts to look into ways that may allow WTO to overcome the most critical and fundamental stalemates in the areas where multilateral convergence had proven to be more challenging. The Ministerial approved an LDC services waiver i.e. any Member giving more market access to LDCs, would not be considered violation of MFN principle. Besides, the accession packages of Russia, Samoa and Vanuatu were also approved.

4. This year, so far, the primary focus of negotiations was on non-Doha issues, which included convergence on a flexible process for accession of LDCs to the WTO. I may also mention that three new Members have formally submitted their ratification instruments and the General Council has also approved the accession package of Laos PDR. After its formal accession, the number of WTO Members would be 158.

5. The next WTO Ministerial is at the end of 2013. Members are currently engaged in defining initiatives, which are doable to move forward. This is a critical moment and multilateral rule-based system cannot afford a failed ministerial. We need to identify the possible steps this year and decide the work programme to be undertaken after MC-9. This is where we are.

6. In this backdrop, the theme of this Conference is connecting politics and trade and the specific topics for deliberations i.e. “trade as a tool of economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation” and “analyzing 21<sup>st</sup> century trade challenges” are appropriate and will generate ideas to help negotiations at Geneva.

7. Since 2008, due to global recession, there was a fear that countries may resort to protectionist policies, which could result in deepening the recession of the like experience of 1930s. It was due to the multilateral rule-based system and monitoring of trade policies by the WTO that these results were avoided to a great extent. Without going into the details of the causes of difficulties in negotiations, we may also recognize that there has been a paradigm shift in the global economy since the beginning of this millennium. On the one hand, China has grown to become the world’s second largest economy and it is now the biggest exporter of goods; on the other hand, the debt levels of the US and Japan have arisen to unprecedented level and the Euro zone crisis which is yet to be contained has resulted in loss of jobs and economic growth. We have also witnessed during this year a slowdown in the growth of international trade in China, India and other emerging developing countries. This year global economic will merely grow slightly over 3% and about 3.5% next year.

8. Negotiators in Geneva are technically equipped but require your political guidance to develop convergence at the multilateral level. Your valued contribution during this Conference can help the negotiators to find a way out of the impasse as well as to address the new challenges faced by the global trade. While keeping the Doha mandate intact, we perhaps need creative thinking to keep the WTO relevant for the present realities.

9. Before concluding, I may mention that in some quarters WTO is considered as synonymous to the DDA and multilateral negotiations to further liberalize trade. It is not exactly true. The normal functioning of this Organization is to keep a constant watch, through regular committees on the implementation of the multilaterally committed regimes in all areas and monitoring of trade policies for a peer review by the Member. Besides, to address the disputes between Members a rule based, highly respected, dispute resolution process is delivering to keep the integrity of multilateral trade. In this manner, the work being done here is transparent, valuable and protects the system for the benefit of the global trade. The important question is how to move forward in updating the rules and to achieve the objective of sustainable growth and manage to further liberalize trade. These are the questions, which do not have simple answers and your deliberations will help us to find them.

10. I am sure that deliberations would be fruitful and wish the visiting Parliamentarians a happy stay in Geneva.

---