EU's strategy to deliver market access for European companies

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The Committee on International Trade adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Mr Ignasi **GUARDANS CAMBÓ** (ALDE, ES) on the EU's Strategy to deliver market access for European companies and in response to the Commission communication entitled 'Global Europe: a stronger partnership to deliver market access for European exporters' stressing that the successful implementation of a revised, more ambitious market access strategy, intended to open new world markets to European products and services, is likely not only to expand the European Union's global role , but also to protect existing jobs and create new jobs in Europe, enhance the European Union's competitiveness and thus substantially contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy;

Analysing the reasons why the European Union's performance in exports to both developed and emerging economies is often hindered, members consider this is due to i) a lack of reciprocity as regards market access conditions, ii) an insufficient degree of compliance with international trade rules and iii) the proliferation of unfair trading practices. The Commission needs to ensure that the European Union's legitimate trade interests are defended against the abusive or unfair trade practices of third countries and when third countries unjustifiably restrict access to their markets by European Union companies, the European Union should react rapidly and firmly.

The European Union's trade partners are called upon to dismantle any barriers restricting market access for goods and services and, instead, to optimize mutual commercial opportunities on the basis of reciprocity, including through satisfactory implementation of market opening measures resulting from bilateral, regional and multilateral negotiations; Third countries are urged to lift foreign ownership restrictions on European companies and to remove discriminatory rules.

Overall, members welcome the Commission's proposals for establishing a stronger partnership between the Commission, the Member States, and European Union businesses with a view to directly helping economic operators overcome the difficulties they encounter in accessing third-country markets. They support the setting-up of dedicated initiatives, within the market access strategy framework, to tackle, in particular, barriers in the fields of services, public procurement, investment and IPRs, state aid and other subsidies, and to establish rules on competition and their adequate implementation in third countries;

They call on the Commission to improve its communication with respect to European exporters and to take the following aspects into consideration when implementing its market access strategy:

- appointing more Brussels-based staff to the unit dealing with market access issues;
- creating an effective complaints register within DG Trade;
- developing structured guidelines for dealing with each category of non-tariff barrier;
- creating a help-desk for Member States and companies (with a section dedicated to SMEs) within DG Trade;
- revising and enhancing the communication policy relating to market access services provided by the Commission, with particular emphasis on SMEs;
- increasing the number of potential users by offering basic information (e.g. brochures and leaflets) in all the official languages of the European Union;
- improving the Market Access Database (MADB) to better meet business needs and make it more user-friendly;

- improving internal cooperation, coherence and communication among those Commission services which deal with market access issues;
- ensuring the participation of representatives of the business community in the MAAC;
- developing structured guidelines for priorities, including which markets, sectors and barriers should be focused on; and
- strengthening its position in international standardisation bodies, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

In parallel, members call on the Commission to consider ‘serious and systematic breaches’ of the WTO agreements and rules and other international trade laws as requiring a prompt remedy, and to ensure that the enforcement of such rules is not subordinated to political and economic considerations ‘other than those relevant to the case in hand’. More generally, they call on the Commission and the Member States to adopt a long-term approach to structural distortions that, by their nature, are likely to continue or recur.

Members believe that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the European Union’s target countries will be meaningless unless they secure significant market access and real progress in reducing and eventually eliminating non-tariff barriers which are often more trade-distorting than tariff barriers.

Other proposals made to the Commission to improve market access for European exporters include measures to exchange information and good practices, as well as enhanced dialogue between European stakeholders. Technical measures, such as improved coordination of policies between the Commission and Member States in respect to third countries, the giving of an unambiguous and ambitious mandate to European Union delegations and to the newly created Market Access Teams are also foreseen to improve market access in third countries, in particular, in key delegations such as Beijing, New Delhi, Moscow and Brasilia;

Lastly, members stress the need to create synergies with the European Union's major trade partners (such as the US, Canada and Japan) with a view to defining a common market access strategy and to paving the way to a much needed multilateral agreement on market access.