Resolution on the Transatlantic Economic Council

2008/2527(RSP) - 08/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held in plenary on 7 May 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Transatlantic Economic Council. The Text had been tabled for consideration in plenary as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN and Greens/ALE groups.

Members underline that a close transatlantic partnership is a vital instrument for shaping globalisation in the interests of common values and an equitable political and economic global order. They strongly support the process of strengthening transatlantic economic integration started at the 2007 summit with the adoption of the Framework for Advancing Transatlantic Economic Integration between the EU and the US and the establishment of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), which is to oversee and accelerate the efforts outlined in the Framework. Parliament takes the view that the results achieved by the TEC since its establishment demonstrate that the transatlantic market cannot be built on administrative work only, but that in order to attain this goal, strong and continuous political guidance is needed.

Members go on to examine several aspects of the TEC that need to be addressed:

Financial services: Parliament referred to the application of the international accounting standards, emphasising the right for EU issuers to use in any third country International Financial Reporting Standards, (IFRS) as endorsed by the EU. It believes that mutual recognition of securities markets between the US and the EU would improve the efficiency of the transatlantic market by facilitating the access of the EU and the US to a broader and deeper market. It underlines, however, that such a project must be a result of a bilateral agreement, that a framework agreement between the US and the EU which takes full account of EU legislation on supervision of financial markets should be concluded, and that the Commission should discourage the conclusion of bilateral agreements between the Member States and the US, as this could endanger the level playing field in the EU. Safeguarding financial stability is of the utmost importance, and enhancing cooperation between supervisory authorities in the US and the EU is vital. Parliament recalls the importance of a coordinated approach when developing or modifying global rules for internationally active financial market players and believes that implementation of Basel II in the US is vital for the preservation of a global level playing field.

EU-US trade and regulatory cooperation: in pursuing the goal of creating uniform standards for trade and investment, a high level of social, environmental and health standards must be guaranteed. A variety of so-called non-tariff barriers to trade and investment is rooted in activities of legislative bodies aimed at achieving social, health-related, cultural or environmental objectives, and hence must not be removed without a legislative act. Parliament points out the crucial role of Parliament and the US Congress in controlling the process of standard alignment and the removal of barriers to trade and investment. It also stresses that the safety of imported products should also be a priority within the TEC, and proposes that the TEC work on a binding cooperation instrument which would structure and facilitate the sharing of information on product safety and the development of a common programme of cooperative actions. The Commission and Council are asked to strengthen cooperation between EU and US customs and market surveillance authorities, in order to ensure that controls at external borders are able to prevent dangerous products, in particular dangerous toys, from reaching consumers.

The Commission is also asked to : i) to negotiate common global standards, such as common automobile safety standards; ii) to pursue the formal adoption of procedures for the mutual recognition of declarations of conformity for products subject to mandatory third-party testing, in particular for

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and electrical equipment; iii) to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the US on the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); iv) to take the initiative, in close cooperation with Parliament, to elaborate transatlantic data protection principles together with the US Federal Trade Commission.

Parliament notes that secure trade is particularly important in an ever more closely integrated global economy, but believes that the proposal to inspect 100% of shipping containers coming from overseas as a measure to avert terrorist threats is unnecessary and unrealistic. It calls upon Congress to withdraw this proposal, as it is convinced that the 'Container Security Initiative 'is a sufficient measure to guarantee the security of international maritime transport.

Agricultural issues: Members call for an urgent solution to the ongoing discussions on the ban on imports into the EU of US poultry which has undergone pathogen reduction treatment. They acknowledge the considerable investments made by the European poultry sector, in accordance with European legislation, to reduce salmonella contamination through a whole chain approach. Any possible solution should not lead to distortion of competition. Parliament believes that the Community's decision to prohibit the import of hormone-treated beef was fully justified on the basis of scientific evidence, and calls on the US to lift its sanctions on European goods without further delay. It emphasises the importance of the single authorisation procedure for all food and feed containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in accordance with the precautionary principle.

Cooperation regarding energy, industry and science: the resolution calls for strategic transatlantic cooperation regarding energy, industry and science policies to be increased. It underlines the need for enhanced EU-US regulatory and scientific cooperation on biofuels and biomass, promoting alternative and sustainable fuel sources for the transportation sector on a joint basis.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Doha Development Agenda: Parliament calls on the Commission to ensure that the TEC is helpful in achieving a positive conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. It asks the Commission to evaluate whether a bilateral trade dispute settlement procedure could become a topic of interest for the TEC.. The TEC is asked actively to support the Doha declaration on the TRIPS Agreement facilitating access to life-saving medicines for those countries which have no production capacity for pharmaceutical products. Parliament calls on the Commission to raise the issue of the US policy of including in bilateral agreements negotiated with developing countries clauses under which those countries renounce the use of the provision of the Doha declaration on the TRIPS Agreement which allows them to produce and import generic drugs to tackle major public health problems. Lastly, it is an important task for the European side in the TEC to convince the EU's transatlantic partners of the need for a legally binding post-Kyoto regime on greenhouse gas emissions by 2012.

Future Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (TLD) agenda: Parliament stresses the need to reflect within the TLD on a WTO post-Doha agenda, including WTO reform, and to discuss human rights and environmental and social rights clauses in bilateral trade agreements. Members reiterate their desire to strengthen dialogue between both parliaments, and call for their early involvement in particular as regards any future rules developed by global self-regulatory bodies in order to address, at an early stage, political accountability issues.