# Protocol amending the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization

2015/2067(INI) - 22/07/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on International Trade adopted an own-initiative report by Pablo ZALBA BIDEGAIN (EPP, ES) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Members **welcomed the results of the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference** in Bali (Indonesia) in December 2013, where negotiations were concluded by the 160 WTO members on the trade facilitation agreement (TFA). They acknowledged the **benefits that the implementation of this agreement will bring for developing countries** given the contribution it will make to a more business-friendly environment, in particular for SMEs.

They emphasised, in particular, that if fully implemented, the agreement ought to:

- reduce uncertainty regarding market entry conditions and the costs of trade by between 12.5% and 17.5% (according to estimates – such as those by the OECD);
- allow consumers to access a larger and cheaper range of products and businesses to access new markets and improve their competitiveness;
- result in the standardisation and simplification of trade-related procedures;
- provide new opportunities to expand the use of innovative technologies and electronic systems, including electronic payment systems, national trade portals and one-stop shops.

Members urged all members of the WTO to try to **find a solution without delay for implementing the Bali Package** in all its aspects, including the reduction of trade-distorting subsidies, so that the DDA can be concluded for the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference.

The report stressed that a number of requirements under the agreement, notably on **transparency and the automated entry and payment of duties**, can be a powerful means of addressing border corruption. It called for **better cooperation between custom authorities** and stressed that greater transparency will lead to a higher level of security and will be a strong incentive for the intensification of trade, in addition to ensuring more effective customs controls.

In this context, Members fully supported the EU initiative of **targeting EUR 400 million in funding over five years** for supporting trade facilitation reforms and projects such as improving the customs systems of developing and least developed countries. They highlighted, however, that this funding should be very well coordinated with the funding coming from other international donors such as UNCTAD, the WTO and the World Bank. They also called for close cooperation with specialist organisations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO).

The report underlined the **key role that can be played by EU delegations** around the world which can work with developing and least developed countries on the ground and asked for the largest possible involvement of these delegations in the disbursement of technical assistance. The Commission is called upon to do its utmost to **support developing and least developed countries** in the implementation of their commitments.

Lastly, Members welcomed the extensive provisions on **special and differential treatment** for developing and least-developed countries. They suggested that the novel approach of making commitments and their scheduling commensurate with countries' capacities should serve as a benchmark for future agreements.