Resolution on multilateral negotiations in view of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva, 30 November to 3 December 2021

2021/2769(RSP) - 25/11/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 383 votes to 81, with 280 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on International Trade on multilateral negotiations in view of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva from 30 November to 3 December 2021.

Modernising and improving the WTO

Reaffirming its commitment to multilateralism, Parliament called for a trade strategy that is based on fair and rules-based trade and contributes to sustainable economic growth while enhancing peace and security.

Members fear that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will lose its legitimacy if all members do not commit to a successful 12th Ministerial Conference. They believe that this conference should be the official starting point for further developing and modernising the WTO to ensure that it can play a role in addressing the challenges of the 20th century, including issues such as climate change and sustainability.

Achieving tangible outcomes

In the context of post-COVID recovery, Parliament called on members to focus on a few tangible outcomes and to find, as a minimum, a multilateral agreement on prohibiting **unsustainable fisheries** subsidies, as well as on **pandemic response**, a limited package on **agriculture**, and on launching work towards **institutional reform**, including a process that would lead to a fully functioning dispute settlement system by the 13th Ministerial Conference.

Deploring the stalemate at the WTO Appellate Body, a situation that deprives the global trading system of an enforceable dispute settlement system, Members called on all WTO members to find solutions to restore a fully operational **two-tier dispute settlement system** with a fully operational and independent Appellate Body as soon as possible.

The Commission and the Council are encouraged to work with all WTO members to initiate a discussion on the establishment of new rules to fill the current gaps in the body of rules on unfair trade practices, counterfeiting, market-distorting subsidies, state-owned enterprises and forced technology transfer.

Members consider that the current differentiation between developed and developing countries does not reflect economic reality and can be an obstacle to progress in the Doha Round. The special and differential treatment mechanism should therefore be revised.

The resolution also called for the possibilities of facilitating data flows with strategically important third countries to be explored urgently. Members believe that data localisation requirements should be avoided if possible, that data should be covered by the EU's free trade agreements and that efforts to conclude adequacy decisions with third countries should be accelerated. They urged that the extension of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) be extended.

Reinforcing alignment with the Paris Agreement and climate neutrality

Parliament believes that the outcome of the 12th Ministerial Conference should provide an action-based agenda for trade policy in support of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. Members strongly encouraged WTO members to consider all possible measures to contribute to **limiting greenhouse gas emissions** in line with the UNFCCC and enhance cooperation in the WTO on domestic measures, including the introduction of green accounting standard taxonomies to help the private and public sectors identify sustainable economic activities, as well as significantly harmful activities, and measures that address carbon leakage. Members stressed the need to advance discussion on goods and services that help address environmental and climate challenges and decent working conditions.

The Commission and the Council are invited to work with other WTO members to ensure that the WTO contributes to strengthening **respect for workers' rights worldwide**, including through the labour standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and to come forward with concrete proposals. All WTO members are encouraged to sign the 2017 Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment.

Lastly, Members called on the Commission and the Council to ensure that they continue to involve Parliament closely in the preparations for the 12th Ministerial Conference, to inform it promptly of the latest developments and to consult it during the 2021 Ministerial Conference. **The parliamentary dimension** of the WTO should be strengthened to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency.