

Resolution on multilateral negotiations in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi 26-29 February 2024

2023/2868(RSP) - 08/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on International Trade on multilateral negotiations in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi 26-29 February 2024.

Modernising and improving the WTO

Parliament reiterated its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and underlined that a modernised multilateral system to govern trade is essential. It called for a trade agenda based on fair and rules-based trade for the benefit of all, which contributes to sustainable economic development, beyond the mere definition of GDP growth and prosperity, thereby strengthening peace and security. It emphasised that the WTO should promote the realisation of the SDGs, health, social, environmental and human rights and ensuring that multilaterally agreed and harmonised rules are applied by all.

According to Members, the 13th Ministerial Conference should be the starting point for advancing and modernising the WTO to ensure it can play a role in addressing the challenges of the 21st century, including on issues such as climate change, food security, biodiversity loss, health, sustainability, and poverty reduction. WTO members are asked to conclude the second phase of the multilateral agreement on **fisheries subsidies** and to overcome the remaining stumbling blocks so it can finally adopt a comprehensive package of institutional reforms, including a decision that would lead to a fully functioning **dispute-settlement system**.

Parliament considered that it is now a matter of urgency to proceed to a **substantive reform** of the WTO and that this should be reflected in the outcome of the Conference.

Regarding **agriculture**, Members stressed the need to make progress in the agriculture negotiations in order to obtain credible results on issues such as a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes, domestic support, market access, cotton, export restrictions and export competition, and strengthening the agricultural sector to respond to contemporary challenges, including rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability. They emphasised the need to ensure fair competition and a level playing field for farmers.

On **digital trade**, while highlighting the importance of multilateral and plurilateral rules on digital trade, as it currently accounts for 25 % of total trade, Parliament strongly encouraged the efforts to find a fair and permanent solution for electronic transmissions related to the moratorium, particularly bearing in mind the negative effects of a non-renewal, especially on women and small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, it recalled its position that a potential agreement needs to guarantee fair market access for e-commerce-related goods and services in third countries, as well as the protection of consumer and labour rights. WTO members are urged to continue to identify solutions that would help micro, small and medium-sized enterprises increase their participation in world trade, while taking into account their specific needs.

Regarding **climate change**, Members believe that the outcome of Conference should provide an action-based agenda for trade policy supporting the 2030 SDGs and the Paris Agreement. They strongly

encouraged WTO members to consider all possible measures to contribute to limiting greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UNFCCC and the conclusions of COP28, to enhance alignment with the Paris Agreement and climate neutrality.

The EU is urged to raise awareness about its sustainability legislation such as Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and deforestation regulation.

Lastly, the Commission and the Council are called on to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of the 13th Ministerial Conference and is promptly updated and consulted during it.