A level playing field for direct investment world-wide

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The committee adopted the report by Mrs Christa RANDZIO-PLATH (PSE, D) on a level playing field for direct investment worldwide. The report emphasized the need to provide multinational enterprises with a harmonized legal framework for their investment decisions. The Committee on External Economic Relations therefore welcomed the initiative taken by the Commission to work, at the level of the WTO, for the negotiation of a multilateral direct-investment agreement and called on the Council to give the Commission a negotiating mandate to this end without delay. The Committee on External Economic Relations called for environmental protection to be taken into account in the multilateral trading system and called on the Member States of the WTO to start discussions on minimum social standards in order to neutralize any social distortions caused by further liberalization of direct investment. The report also recommended harmonization in the field of competition policy. The report made provision for variable deadlines for the implementation of obligations, so that developing countries could accede to the multilateral agreement. The Committee on External Economic Relations considered that non-member countries of the OECD should be included in negotiations on the multilateral agreement, given the increase in investment flows in South-East Asia, Latin America and the CEECs.