Trade and environment

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As part of the preparations for the WTO conference in Singapore, the Committee on External Economic Relations adopted a report by Mr KREISS-DÖRFLER advocating that a separate United Nations agency be set up specifically to monitor multilateral environmental agreements. In the interim, WTO panels considering trade and environmental matters should ensure greater transparency and participation by environmental experts. The proposal for a resolution attached to the report calls for a code of conduct for transnational corporations as well as a general ban on domestically prohibited goods. It also considered that environmental impact costs should be internalized in energy prices and welcomed the adoption of border taxes on manufactured products. Member States could continue to restrict or ban imports of goods for reasons of consumer health and environmental protection, provided that these measures were not discriminatory. Finally, the committee emphasized that the social and human rights dimension was inseparable from the environmental dimension of trade issues and called on the Commission and the Member States to seek the revision of the relative article of the GATT at the conference.