Resolution on preparations for the 5th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation WTO in Cancun

2003/2556(RSP) - 03/07/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted, by 297 votes for, 93 against and 18 abstentions, a joint resolution on the forthcoming Ministerial WTO round to be held in Cancún on 10-14 September 2003. The Parliament reiterated its commitment to the to the objective of reforming the world trade system in the interests of fairness, democracy, sustainable development and the fight against poverty. Concerning the issue of development, Parliament considers that it is essential that the industrialised countries make very substantial offers to developing countries in the areas of industrial and agricultural market access, implementation issues, including special and differential treatment, providing effective preferences to the most vulnerable developing countries. MEPs also stress that all necessary measures should be taken to prevent the export of cheap medicines back to Europe. On market access for agricultural products, the House believes in the need substantially to reduce, with a view to their elimination, export subsidies and domestic supports by all WTO members, with the exception of domestic support linked to non-trade concerns. And, in view of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, MEPs call on all industrialised countries, especially the United States, to match the EU's commitments. Specifically on the "precautionary principle", the House emphasises the need to clarify, within GATT, the meaning of "precautionary principle", in order to avoid misunderstandings or differences in interpretation. With regard to TRIPs, (trade in intellectual property) MEPs underline, within TRIPs, the importance of implementing, within the agreed timetable, rules concerning trademarks for producers and consumers, requests the reinforcement of these rules and that special attention be devoted to the issue of designs and models and to the question of the international exhaustion of trade marks, as well as actions against counterfeiting and piracy. As to the rules governing the WTO, the House calls for enhanced transparency with regard to general subsidies by enforcing the notification obligation and the inclusion of disciplines such as disguised R&D subsidies, state-controlled entities and local content subsidies. The House also recalls the reaffirmation in Doha of the Singapore Ministerial's commitment on labour rights. MEPs believe, however, that further progress is essential and call therefore on the Cancún Conference to demonstrate the WTO members' commitment to core labour standards and to agree on the inclusion of core labour standards in WTO trade policy reviews. The House suggests that a permanent panel body be established and that recourse to compensatory measures, in the event of non-compliance with Dispute Settlement Body rulings, should be facilitated, and that access to the dispute settlement system should become cheaper and easier for developing countries. Finally, MEPs call on the Ministerial Conference to enhance the democratic accountability and openness of the WTO, both at the level of WTO members and through the creation of a WTO Parliamentary Assembly. MEPs also welcome the fact that the draft Constitution, produced by the Convention on the Future of Europe, grants Parliament the power of assent on all international trade agreements, while regretting that it does not propose a formal parliamentary role in the opening of negotiations. On an environmental level, the Parliament takes the view thatthis should end in the inclusion of the provisions aimed at safeguarding environmental sustainability: full incorporation of the precautionary principle into WTO rules; the insulation of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) from unwarranted challenges within the WTO; a closer relationship between the WTO and international environmental bodies, notably UNEP; the strengthening of the MEAs and their own dispute settlement mechanisms; and further reflection on the way WTO rules apply to process and production methods (PPMs), as well as the way in which the burden of proof on environment and public safety matters falls upon importing countries. As regards core labour standards, Parliament calls on the Cancún Conference to demonstrate the WTO members' commitment to core labour standards and to agree on the inclusion of core labour standards in WTO trade policy reviews. Parliament also suggests that a permanent panel body should be established to settle disputes. Recourse to compensatory measures, in the event of non-compliance with Dispute

Settlement Body rulings, should be facilitated and that the access to the dispute settlement system should become cheaper and easier for developing countries. Lastly, concerning internal institutional aspects, the Parliament calls on the Commission to keep it fully informed, before and during the Ministerial Conference in Cancún and throughout the negotiations, and to discuss with it regularly, on the basis of the resolutions adopted by Parliament, the essential elements of the EU's negotiating strategy. It recalls the right secured at the close of the Uruguay Round to subject the conclusion of the results of the New Round to a vote of assent. In this context, Parliament welcomes the fact that the draft Constitution produced by the European Convention grants the European Parliament the power of assent on all international trade agreements.