Resolution on preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation WTO in Hong Kong

2005/2628(RSP) - 01/12/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Parliament considers it essential that the Doha Round must succeed in order to strengthen the multilateral trade system so as to ensure the progress and harmonious development of the world economy. It reaffirms its strong support for placing development at the heart of the Doha Round and stresses that the negotiations must serve the purpose of eradicating poverty and bringing about fairer distribution of the benefits of globalisation. On the other hand, it regrets the slow progress made during the negotiations prior to Hong Kong and calls for a constructive 6th Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong so as to pave the way for a successful completion of the Doha Development Agenda in 2006.

All stakeholders, especially all developed and more advanced countries, are called upon to assume their responsibilities in the run-up to Hong Kong in order to bring the round closer to a successful conclusion; considers that all parties should make efforts commensurate with their stage of development and negotiating power.

Agriculture : the resolutionrecalls that the result to be achieved in Hong Kong on agriculture must include a timely phasing-out of all export subsidies, in parallel, by all developed-country WTO members, including those granted in the form of food aid or through state-trading entities and other export subsidies. It stresses that a substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support and a significant improvement in market access are equally needed. In this respect, Parliament reiterates its support for the CAP reform. The concept of the multifunctional character of EU agriculture should be respected within the trade negotiations and Parliament upholds the EU's emphasis on non-trade concerns in order to safeguard food quality and safety, the protection of the environment, rural employment and development. Moreover, Parliament calls for effective recognition of geographical indications, as a factor in regional development and a means of sustaining cultural traditions, to be achieved in the current round and insists on the importance of finding a solution with regard to sensitive products which fully respects the principles of the Doha Development Round. It equally calls for an effective solution to be found in respect of cotton and emphasises in this regard that all export-related support for cotton in the developed countries must be eliminated by 2010 and calls especially on the US to follow the EU in reforming its cotton market.

Non-agricultural market access (NAMA): Parliament emphasises that the WTO negotiations on NAMA should be accelerated as soon as possible. It considers that trade barriers between developed countries and developing countries, but also among developing countries, are an obstacle to sustainable development. In the interests of a further progressive south-south market opening, it is vital for the more advanced countries to shoulder their responsibility by opening their markets to the LDCs. It is also noted that it is of strategic importance that all trading partners, where justified, also remove their non-tariff barriers, since these hamper market access and may do so even more when tariff barriers are further reduced.

Services: Parliament recognises that it is necessary for the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference to lay the foundations for an ambitious agreement on trade in services, enhancing, on the one hand, market access for EU service providers, and safeguarding, on the other, the ability of all WTO members, in accordance with the GATS Agreement, to regulate their services sectors. It notes that the EU has a strong interest in expanding export opportunities for service providers and considers that substantive progress must be made in this field, with an exception for health, education and audiovisual services. Parliament urges the developed and emerging WTO members to exhibit the same level of commitment as contained in the EU's

revised offer of January 2005 and to submit commensurate offers. It equally stresses that, given the lack of progress in the Doha negotiations so far, supplementary approaches entailing further market opening in the field of services should be investigated, with due regard for the interests of LDCs and calls for greater transparency in GATS negotiations.

Development issues: Parliament strongly believes that trade coupled with aid and debt relief is essential to the achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and calls for concrete results with regard to the development aspects of the Doha Round already to be achieved during the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference. It considers that the application of Special and Differential Treatment (S&D) should form an integral part of the WTO Agreements. Developed countries are called upon to open their markets through tariff- and quota-free access for all goods from the LDCs, as already realised by the European Union, in particular as a result of the 'Everything but Arms' initiative. Parliament fully supports the idea of a 'free round' for the least developed and vulnerable countries and stresses that this would be an important stimulus for north-south trade. Moreover, Parliament calls for a coherent 'aid for trade' facility for developing countries that will need assistance to build the capacity necessary for them to realise benefits from improvements in market access and trade rules and also to enable them to diversify their production bases, to replace customs resources with other fiscal resources and to fulfil the commitments given within the WTO. A permanent solution has to be found, as a matter of urgency, in the field of TRIPs (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and TRIMs (Trade-Related Investment Measures) so as to ensure access to medicines for countries with no manufacturing capacity that are facing public health concerns.

Further topics: Parliamentstresses the importance of trade facilitation for enhancing the exchange of goods and services among countries, notably developing countries. It insists on clarification of, and a significant reduction of red tape in, customs procedures. Progress is called for in the area of TRIPs and for action against counterfeiting and piracy and it considers that the fulfilment of these goals will strengthen the multilateral trade system.

WTO reform and transparency: Parliament calls on the Commission to keep it fully informed, before and during the Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong and throughout the negotiations, and to engage in a regular dialogue on the essential elements of the EU negotiating mandate. It recalls the right acquired at the end of the Uruguay Round to subject the conclusion of the results of the subsequent rounds to the European Parliament's assent. The importance of maintaining public and political support for the WTO multilateral trade system is stressed. Lastly, Parliament insists on a much-needed WTO reform, including an improvement of the negotiating procedures, in order to improve efficiency and transparency and to reach a degree of consensus among WTO members and it equally underlines the importance of reforming the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism.