

Assessment of the Doha Round following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Giorgios PAPASTAMKOS (EPP-ED, EL) on the assessment of the Doha Round following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong.

Deploping the slow progress in the negotiations so far and the "predetermined low level of ambition" for the outcome of the Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, MEPs called for a greater commitment of all major players, including the EU, the US and the emerging economies. Industrialised countries and advanced developing countries should engage constructively in real negotiations to reach a successful conclusion. The report said that "the target of 2006 for the conclusion of the Round simply must not be missed". And it stressed that a successful conclusion of the negotiations must contribute to achieving the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.

On agriculture, the committee said that the commitments made by the Commission during the negotiations at the WTO must not go beyond the bounds of the current CAP arrangements or the negotiating mandate. It recalled the scope of the Luxembourg agreement on CAP reform and insisted on the need to define 'green box' measures, including decoupled support. MEPs also deplored the absence of progress on the establishment of a register for wines and spirits as well as on the extension of geographical indications to other products. The report asked the Commission to consider the possibility of introducing a 'development box' for the Least Developed Countries into the agricultural negotiations, so that they can tackle food safety and rural employment - major issues when it comes to eradicating poverty.

The committee said that negotiations on non-agricultural market access should lead to ambitious and balanced results, guaranteeing new real market access opportunities. Given the lack of progress in the services area, the report called for the intensification of negotiations at both bilateral and multilateral levels, with due regard for the interests of weak and vulnerable economies. It reiterated that essential public services, such as health, education and audiovisual services, should be excluded from liberalisation. However, it insisted that the EU should continue emphasising the liberalisation of services and the opening of markets, especially in the finance, tourist and distribution sectors, which are important for the European economy.

MEPs also called for strengthened discipline with regard to anti-dumping and other rules issues in order to prevent abusive recourse to trade defence instruments while preserving the legitimate use and effectiveness of these instruments. Among other points, the report called on the EU negotiators within the WTO to start formulating an EU position on energy that introduces greater security of supply and stronger market forces in this field. Lastly, it called for institutional reform to improve the functioning of the WTO and reiterated the importance of a parliamentary dimension for the WTO to enhance its democratic legitimacy and transparency, given that members of Parliament can constitute an important link with citizens.