

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

2005/2247(INI) - 04/04/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament 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. The non-binding report was adopted by 493 votes in favour to 103 against with 25 abstentions. (Please refer to the summary dated 22/02/2006).

Furthermore, it should be added that the Parliament highlighted the important offer made by the EU to abolish its export refund system by 2013 and insisted that a parallel move by other WTO members was required in the areas of export credits, State trading enterprises and food aid. It emphasised that 2013 is an end-date for this process and calls for a frontloading of a substantial part of the cuts in the first half of the implementation period.

In addition, the importance of encouraging public and political support for the WTO multilateral trading system has been stressed. Parliament notes that companies have a legitimate interest in shaping policies that affect how they do business and that the participation of different groups, including NGOs, is crucial to the WTO's functioning. It stresses, however, that corporate and NGO priorities disproportionately influence the WTO's policy agenda and could play a bigger role than democratically elected parliamentarians with regard to the final document. The Commission is urged to carefully examine the role of companies and NGOs in the negotiation process and there is a need for increased transparency and the reduction of corporate and NGO privileges. Equally, Parliament stresses that better information of the public and wider consultation of civil society are needed and it reiterates, in this respect, the important contribution the parliamentary dimension can make as a means of strengthening the WTO's democratic accountability and openness to the citizens.

The importance of the work of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in strengthening the democratic dimension of the WTO is also stressed. Parliament notes, however, the lack of consideration given to its Final Declarations by WTO negotiators. It acknowledges the effort made by EU negotiators to address the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO but deplores the lack of engagement of other WTO negotiators.

Lastly, the importance of Parliament being represented at all WTO meetings at which major steps in the negotiations are taken and where ministers are involved and not only on the occasion of official Ministerial Conferences is stressed. Parliament requests, therefore, that a small delegation of MEPs be meaningfully involved in the meetings to be convened in Geneva with a view to meeting the 30 April and 31 July 2006 deadlines set in the Hong Kong Declaration. The Council is invited to extend an invitation to such a delegation of MEPs to participate, as observers, in at least one of the meetings of the 133 Committee to be organised in Geneva at the end of April 2006. The Commission is called upon to support this initiative and to ensure that members of the Parliament receive appropriate information on the progress of negotiations during their stay in Geneva.