Perspectives of women in international trade

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Hiltrud BREYER (Greens/EFA, DE) entitled "perspectives of women in international trade". MEPs said that trade had the potential to contribute to gender equality and to empower women economically, socially and politically. They pointed out, however, that the trade globalisation process had in practice contributed to the increase in insecure work and growing female unemployment in many economic sectors.

The report noted that 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty in the world are women, who generally have greater difficulty gaining access to education, property, credit and other resources as well as to political decision-making and are restricted by gender roles. These inequalities hamper their ability to take advantage of trade liberalisation. The committee urged the Commission to try to introduce an action plan for gender mainstreaming in international trade policies and create a special fund in development cooperation policy to support women's access to credit, education and vocational training. MEPs also said that the Commission should operate a gender impact assessment before concluding any trade agreements with third countries.

Finally, to raise the profile of gender issues in world trade negotiations the report called on the Member States to "do their utmost" to recruit women to their trade ministries at all levels, including at ministerial level, and to support women candidates for positions in international organisations.