
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

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DECLARATION

As members of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, we extend our sincere congratulations to Mr. Roberto Azevêdo on his appointment as the next WTO Director-General. A strong WTO requires continued effective leadership. We are hopeful that the new Director-General will help reinvigorate the multilateral trade negotiations, ensure a successful conclusion of the Doha Round and enhance cooperation with international organizations responsible for setting social and environmental standards.

We also take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Director-General, Mr. Pascal Lamy. Parliamentarians around the world greatly value his support for an active and meaningful parliamentary dimension of the WTO. The fact that the last two sessions of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO were held on WTO premises speaks volumes about his commitment to this goal.

We are convinced that, at this stage, no task is more important than ensuring the success of the forthcoming 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali. We encourage the negotiators to scale up their work on all fronts. A positive outcome of the Bali Conference would not only send an important message to the world economy, which is still struggling with the after-shocks of the global crisis, but would also reaffirm the lasting value of multilateralism. Inversely, failure to obtain an agreement on a limited set of issues currently under discussion may well mean indefinitely suspending the Doha Development Agenda.

In keeping with the developmental aspect of the Doha Round, it will be necessary to make balanced progress on all items on the Bali Conference agenda, including trade facilitation, agriculture, food security and LDC-specific issues. With this in mind, we welcome the significant progress recently achieved in trade facilitation negotiations and urge WTO Members to redouble their efforts in this direction, paying particular attention to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the self-employed. Non-tariff barriers should be harmonized while costly administrative procedures should be dematerialized. It is vital that developing countries, and in particular the least developed ones, receive an appropriate level of technical assistance and capacity-building support. In this connection, we stress the importance of the 4th Global Review of Aid for Trade as an opportunity to refocus efforts on those countries that remain marginalized in the global trading system. An agreement in Bali would bring substantial economic benefits to all WTO Members and mark an important victory for the multilateral trading system.

In the face of growing concerns about the deteriorating situation with employment and social justice at this time of crisis, we restate our belief in the need for a strong

parliamentary dimension of the WTO as a means of preventing the erosion of public support for open trade. We call on governments to pursue coherent domestic and international policies aimed at curbing unemployment and reducing social inequalities.

Instead of placing multilateral, plurilateral, regional and bilateral layers and components of the international trading system in competition, it is necessary to ensure their essential coherence and conformity to WTO rules.

We draw the attention of negotiators to the particular situation of smaller non-industrialized WTO Members sharing a common border with countries that are not part of the WTO. Inflated energy costs, unfair labour practices, environmental laws and border restrictions result in competitiveness-related problems for such WTO Members and require targeted measures of technical assistance.

We take note of the recently published report of the High-Level Panel on Defining the Future of Trade and consider it a useful contribution to the ongoing process of reflection on the future agenda for the WTO. With the world economy undergoing profound transformation, the WTO urgently needs to adjust its focus and working methods in order to enhance its role as an organization working for sustainable development, jobs creation and poverty alleviation.