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# BRUSSELS SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

24-26 November 2004

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*Organised jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament*

## ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. **Adoption of the agenda**
2. **Interactive panel discussion: The significance of the WTO General Council decision of 31 July 2004 for the future of the Doha Round**

*Following marathon negotiations, on 31 July 2004 the WTO General Council adopted a package of decisions providing a roadmap for moving forward the process started in Doha. The group of five (Australia, Brazil, European Union, India, United States of America) played an important role in this breakthrough, as did others including the WTO Director-General and the Chairman of the WTO General Council. By way of introduction, participants in the Parliamentary Conference will have an opportunity to listen to the views of top WTO negotiators on the future of the Doha Round and will be able to pose direct questions in this regard.*

3. **Debate on substantive themes:**

*The Brussels session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO is taking place when, notwithstanding renewed momentum in the negotiations, some important differences remain between the positions of WTO Members. Concentrated political will is required to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion. Conference delegates are invited to focus, from a parliamentary perspective, on some of the key areas of current WTO negotiations.*

### **(a) Agriculture**

*Agriculture is of critical importance to economic development and growth prospects of many developing countries and is equally essential for developed countries. This is why one of the major merits of the WTO General Council's decision of 31 July 2004 was the adoption of a framework for establishing negotiating modalities in agriculture. For the first time, WTO Members have agreed to abolish all forms of agricultural export subsidies by an end date to be determined, substantially reduce trade-distorting domestic support in agriculture, and expand market access for agricultural goods through significant reduction in tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Members have also undertaken to address "ambitiously, expeditiously and specifically" the issue of cotton subsidies. Conference delegates are invited to discuss how parliamentarians can contribute to the materialization of this compromise sketched in the 31 July 2004 decision, recognizing the development imperatives of developing countries.*

### **(b) Trade in services from a development perspective**

*In many countries, including least developed ones, services play an important role in the domestic economy but generate only a fraction of export earnings. To advance the negotiations on trade in services in line with the Doha mandate, WTO Members have committed to achieve progressively higher levels of liberalization with no a priori exclusion of any service sector or mode of supply, while giving special attention to the interests of*

*developing countries. Under this item, Conference delegates are invited to discuss how parliaments can facilitate progress in the services negotiations and to come up with specific recommendations in this regard.*

**4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO**

*At the Cancún session, it was decided to establish the Rules of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. The Steering Committee has prepared a draft of such Rules which it submits to the Conference for adoption. The Rules would be applied as from the following session of the Conference.*

**5. Adoption of the outcome document**

*At the end of the session, the participants will be invited to consider and adopt an outcome document, the draft of which will be prepared by the Conference Steering Committee.*

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**Optional side event: Practical aspects of trade-related capacity-building with special focus on the needs of parliaments**

*Technical assistance and capacity-building programmes adjusted to the needs of developing countries are vital for advancing the Doha Development Agenda. The growing role of parliaments in overseeing governments' action in multilateral trade negotiations requires capacity-building measures focused on the unique oversight functions of parliaments. On the other hand, such measures should be seen as an integral part of the commitment efforts to enhance the developing countries' overall capacity to negotiate and effectively implement agreements.*

*During this one-hour optional event, to be held during the lunch pause on the second day of the Conference, delegates will be briefed on current programmes carried out by UNDP and UNCTAD in this field and will have an opportunity to put forward their suggestions for strengthening capacity-building measures, in particular those focused on the needs of parliamentarians specializing in international trade.*