



TEXTS ADOPTED

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Multilateral negotiations in view of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference

European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2017 on multilateral negotiations in view of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, 10-13 December 2017 (2017/2861(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of 14 November 2001¹,
- having regard to the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of the WTO of 18 December 2005²,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), in particular those of 9 October 2008³, 16 December 2009⁴, 14 September 2011⁵, 21 November 2013⁶ and 26 November 2015⁷,
- having regard to the results of the 9th Ministerial Conference held in Bali in December 2013, and in particular the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)⁸,
- having regard to the results of the 10th Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi in December 2015 and the Ministerial Declaration adopted on 19 December 2015⁹,

¹ Doha Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1) of 14 November 2001 – https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_e.htm

² Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(05)/DEC) of 18 December 2005 – https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min05_e/final_text_e.htm

³ OJ C 9 E, 15.1.2010, p. 31.

⁴ OJ C 286 E, 22.10.2010, p. 1.

⁵ OJ C 51 E, 22.2.2013, p. 84.

⁶ OJ C 436, 24.11.2016, p. 6.

⁷ OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 140.

⁸ Bali Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(13)/DEC) of 7 December 2013 – https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc9_e/balideclaration_e.htm

⁹ Nairobi Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(15)/DEC) of 19 December 2015 – https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc10_e/nairobipackage_e.htm

- having regard to the Outcome Document adopted by consensus on 14 June 2016 at the Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in Geneva¹,
 - having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals²,
 - having regard to the 6th Global Review of Aid for Trade, which took place in Geneva from 11 to 13 July 2017³,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas since its creation, the WTO has played a pivotal role in strengthening multilateralism, promoting an inclusive world economic order and fostering an open, rule-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system; whereas the Doha Round was launched in 2001 with the objectives of creating new trading opportunities, strengthening multilateral trade rules and addressing current imbalances in the trading system by placing the needs and interests of developing countries, and especially of the least developed countries (LDCs), at the heart of the negotiations;
- B. whereas the EU has consistently advocated a strong multilateral rule-based approach to trade, while recognising that complementary approaches such as bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements may also foster trade opening and economic development, especially by unlocking liberalisation and upgrading rules and disciplines in policy areas tackled less thoroughly by the WTO, and may support the multilateral system, provided that such agreements are WTO compatible, are based on shared rules and create the conditions for possible future multilateralisation;
- C. whereas the results of the 9th Ministerial Conference in 2013 were of systemic importance, in particular the conclusion of the TFA, the most significant multilateral trade deal concluded since the establishment of the WTO in 1995;
- D. whereas certain WTO members are trying to undermine the current model of international trade dispute settlement; whereas the Appellate Body of the WTO is approaching the minimum number of judges it needs to function; whereas the US recently rejected proposals from the EU and some Latin American countries to begin a selection process to fill the growing number of vacancies; whereas this deadlock, which has already left two of the seven seats on the Appellate Body vacant, could lead to the collapse of a system that is essential to managing disputes among the world's most powerful trading nations;
- E. whereas the outcomes achieved at the 10th Ministerial Conference in 2015 were also of major importance, with a series of six ministerial decisions on agriculture, cotton and issues related to LDCs, including a commitment to abolish export subsidies for farm exports, which is probably the most significant outcome on agriculture ever within the WTO;
- F. whereas recent discussions on how to advance on the DDA have clearly shown that WTO members have differing views as to how to proceed with the negotiations, which demonstrates that a review of the level of ambition is needed in order to realistically

¹ <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/trade16/outcome.pdf>

² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

³ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr17_e/gr17programme_e.htm

achieve outcomes across all pillars of the negotiations, and whereas this review needs to take full account of the reality of today's trading environment;

- G. whereas the digital transformation of the economy opens up new channels for trade, facilitating the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in world trade through e-commerce; whereas this is increasingly seen as a matter in which the WTO could play an important role;
- H. whereas the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 10 to 13 December 2017;
 - 1. Reiterates its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and calls for a trade agenda based on free, fair and rule-based trade for the benefit of all, which supports the sustainable development agenda by giving primary importance to social, environmental and human rights, and ensuring that multilaterally agreed and harmonised rules are uniformly applied to all;
 - 2. Emphasises the need to build on the results agreed at the 9th and 10th Ministerial Conferences to take and guarantee substantive progressive steps at MC11 in Buenos Aires in December 2017, with a view to maintaining and strengthening the multilateral trade architecture; stresses that, despite this, the parties should pursue new policy objectives in areas such as a digital trade and investment facilitation;
 - 3. Urges all WTO members to capitalise on the momentum created by recent progress, bearing in mind the strategic objective of strengthening the multilateral trading system and the need to consolidate the WTO as the centre of trade negotiations, while at the same time recognising that new approaches are necessary in order to face the current challenges; acknowledges that flexibility, openness, inclusiveness and political engagement will be key to advancing in a global, balanced and realistic way on the remaining issues of the DDA; takes the view that, since the Doha Round was launched in 2001, the world has changed dramatically in economic, political and technological terms, and that new challenges such as e-commerce, digital trade, investment transparency, subsidies and overcapacity, global value chains, public procurement, domestic regulation for services, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and greater compatibility between trade, labour and environmental agendas beyond the DDA need to be discussed, which can be done without prejudice to outstanding issues on the DDA; stresses the need to enable developing countries to find their own approaches for continuing to ensure equal opportunities in these new sectors;
 - 4. Underlines the importance of the WTO functioning as an efficient and effective negotiating forum on all issues of interest to its members and providing a platform for open discussion on global trade-related issues;
 - 5. Stresses the need to go to Buenos Aires with well advanced textual proposals in order to ensure more transparent and inclusive trade negotiations, as the Ministerial Conference should be thoroughly prepared for through negotiations at committee level; commends, in this regard, the advanced negotiations on issues such as fisheries subsidies as a way to combat overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
 - 6. Takes note of the proposals put forward on domestic support in agriculture, including the joint proposal by the EU and Brazil; considers that moving the debate forward in this area

could be a crucial outcome of MC11; reiterates, in this context, the need to find a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes, cotton support and subsidies, in keeping with the Nairobi Ministerial Decision; stresses that the negotiations on this topic and their potential outcome must not take precedence over the discussions on the future of common agricultural policy;

7. Reaffirms the importance of advancing negotiations and reaching outcomes on other issues raised by members, including: domestic regulation in services, e-commerce, investment facilitation, horizontal subsidies and improving transparency and good regulatory practices for the benefit of SMEs;
8. Believes that the outcome of the 2017 Ministerial Conference should clearly recognise the importance of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and of the Paris Agreement commitments in the fight against climate change and the role which trade can play in contributing towards their achievement, and that it must define concrete actions to be taken in this regard, given that global standards and a multilateral playing field are beneficial for global trade;
9. Reaffirms the links between gender equality and inclusive development, emphasising that women's empowerment is key to the eradication of poverty and that removing barriers to women's participation in trade is critical for economic development; acknowledges the need to develop interventions that address the range of barriers that limit opportunities for women in the economy; calls on WTO members to include a work programme to ensure that gender-aware trade policy features among the outcomes of the 2017 Ministerial Conference;
10. Draws attention to the 6th Global Review of Aid for Trade held in July 2017 in Geneva, entitled 'promoting trade, inclusiveness and connectivity for sustainable development' and which focused on the need to bridge the digital divide, among other things;
11. Supports the view that this should be translated into concrete actions in order to facilitate e-commerce and turn digital opportunities into trade realities; underlines that better connectivity offers more business opportunities by making it easier and less costly, including for business people in MSMEs in developing countries, to access markets; notes, in this regard, that investment in infrastructure remains a key challenge and that it is crucial to achieve progress in this area; calls, therefore, on the WTO membership to promote investment in infrastructure, encouraging, among other initiatives, public-private partnerships;
12. Highlights the importance of discussing possible trade policy answers to the increasing phenomenon of servicification in the field of trade in goods ('mode 5');
13. Calls on the Commission to continue its efforts towards developing a set of binding multilateral disciplines on e-commerce in the WTO; supports the EU communication entitled 'An enabling environment to facilitate online transactions' presented to the Members of the Council for Trade in Services in June 2017, which provides a much-needed and timely set of common principles on consumer protection, unsolicited messages, authentication and trust services and electronic contracts, which would enhance the trust and confidence of consumers online and create an enabling environment for digital trade;

14. Encourages the resumption of the plurilateral trade negotiations on the Environmental Goods Agreement;
15. Welcomes the entry into force of the TFA on 22 February 2017; considers that this agreement will bring significant benefits to all WTO members, and in particular to developing countries and relevant economic operators, by enhancing transparency and legal certainty and reducing administrative costs and the length of customs procedures;
16. Stresses the importance of all WTO members delivering on the decisions taken in both Nairobi and Bali, including the creation of new export opportunities for LDC service providers under the LDC services waiver and the simplification of regulations governing rules of origin; takes note of the growing interest among WTO members in a services facilitation agreement; calls for enhanced efforts at multilateral level to significantly simplify and harmonise rules of origin;
17. Stresses the crucial importance of the WTO for the rule-based trading system and sees as critical the need to secure the implementation of its decisions, the enforcement of binding commitments and the settlement of trade disputes, as well as its unique contribution to promoting greater transparency and peer review, notably through the trade policy review mechanism (TPRM); expresses its utmost concern that several posts on the Appellate Body remain vacant, which severely constrains the work of this crucial body by threatening to undermine the current and proper functioning of the dispute settlement, and insists on a rapid decision on filling these posts;
18. Stresses the need for a final MC11 declaration in which members could specify new areas and areas listed on the Doha Round agenda in which they will start and continue to negotiate;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of MC11, and is promptly updated and consulted during the 2017 Ministerial Conference; calls on the Commission to continue to make the case to other WTO members for increasing the importance of the parliamentary dimension of the WTO;
20. Calls on WTO members to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the WTO; stresses, in this connection, the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation and implementation of WTO decisions, and that trade policies are properly scrutinised in the interests of their citizens;
21. Regrets that the Mini-Ministerial Conference of 9 and 10 October 2017 in Marrakesh did not lead to significant progress with a view to the MC11; calls on all parties to fully assume their own responsibilities and translate the willingness emerging from the political declarations into concrete actions in the negotiations, in order to achieve positive results at the MC11 in Buenos Aires and create a solid basis for further actions and decisions beyond the 2017 Ministerial Conference;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Director-General of the WTO.