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The state of play of the Doha Development Agenda in advance of the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference

European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2015 on the state of play of the Doha Development Agenda in advance of the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference (2015/2632(RSP))

(2017/C 366/13)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of 14 November 2001 ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of the WTO of 18 December 2005 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2006 on the assessment of the Doha Round following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 April 2008 entitled ‘Towards a reform of the World Trade Organisation’ ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), in particular those of 9 October 2008 ⁽⁵⁾, 16 December 2009 ⁽⁶⁾, 14 September 2011 ⁽⁷⁾ and of 21 November 2013 ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the results of the 9th Ministerial conference in Bali in December 2013 and in particular the agreement on trade facilitation ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to the Outcome Document adopted by consensus on 17 February 2015 at the Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in Geneva ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to the statements made at the WTO heads of delegation meeting on 17 June 2015,
- having regard to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals ⁽¹¹⁾,
- having regard to the Fifth Global Review of Aid for Trade, which took place in Geneva from 30 June to 2 July 2015 ⁽¹²⁾,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. 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; whereas these objectives stem from the conviction that a multilateral system based on more just and equitable rules can contribute to fair and free trade at the service of the economic development of all continents and the alleviation of poverty;

⁽¹⁾ Doha WTO Ministerial 2001: Ministerial declaration WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1 of 20 November 2001 https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_e.htm

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

⁽³⁾ OJ C 293 E, 2.12.2006, p. 155.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 259 E, 29.10.2009, p. 77.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 9 E, 15.1.2010, p. 31.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 286 E, 22.10.2010, p. 1.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 51 E, 22.2.2013, p. 84.

⁽⁸⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0511.

⁽⁹⁾ The Bali Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(13)/DEC), adopted on 7 December 2013 https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc9_e/balideclaration_e.htm

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/trade15/outcome.pdf>

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

⁽¹²⁾ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/global_review15prog_e/global_review15prog_e.htm

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- B. whereas the EU has consistently advocated for a strong multilateral rules-based approach to trade, whilst 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 in the WTO, and may support the multilateral system, provided such agreements are WTO-compatible, are based on shared rules and create the conditions for possible future multilateralisation;
- C. whereas although the WTO and the rules enshrined in the WTO-covered agreements have been essential in avoiding fully fledged and widespread protectionism as a response to the most serious financial and economic crisis since the 1930s, a WTO report from November 2014 states that of the 1 244 restrictive measures recorded since the onset of the crisis in 2008, only 282 have been removed, increasing the need for more action against such measures; whereas failure to upgrade rules may lead to new and innovative ways of protecting domestic markets and producers;
- D. whereas open and fair multilateral trade is being constrained more by various non-tariff barriers (NTBs) than by trade tariffs, which are being waived substantially as globalisation progresses;
- E. whereas it is nonetheless important to take into account the sensitivity of some sectors, and of the agricultural sector in particular, as regards opening up the market;
- F. whereas reform of the Common Agricultural Policy constitutes the European Union's contribution to the expectations of the Doha Round;
- G. whereas the results of the Ninth Ministerial Conference in 2013 are of systemic importance for the organisation, and in particular the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) which was agreed there and which is the first time since the WTO was founded in 1995 that a multilateral agreement was reached; whereas the European Union ratified the TFA on 5 October 2015;
- H. whereas recent discussions on how to advance on the DDA have clearly shown that a review of the level of ambition is needed in order to realistically achieve outcomes across all pillars of negotiations, and that this review needs to take full account of the reality of today's trading environment;
- I. whereas the Tenth Ministerial WTO Conference (MC10) that will take place in Kenya from 15 to 18 December 2015 will be the first time a WTO Ministerial Conference is held in an African country; whereas the EU remains firmly committed to the DDA and acknowledges that reaching a political deal on advancing the DDA will be of importance for ensuring that the WTO's negotiating function remains central to the further liberalisation of trade on a global scale;
1. Reiterates its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and calls for a trade agenda based on free and fair trade for the benefit of all, which should have development at the centre of the process;
 2. Stresses the importance of taking full account in the negotiations of the special needs and interests of low-income developing countries and LDCs; considers a clear definition of low-income developing countries and emerging economies to be necessary; reiterates the need to ensure that the principle of special and differential treatment (S&DT) constitutes an integral part of the negotiations, reflecting the varying economic development levels of WTO members as set out in paragraph 44 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration; considers that meaningful S&DT provisions must be made more precise, subject to periodic reviews and targeted to respond to the need of those developing countries and LDCs which are most in need; commends the example of the Trade Facilitation Agreement in operationalising the S&DT principle for implementation phases which could set a useful example in the reviewing and targeting of S&DT provisions;

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3. Supports a structural reform of the WTO, in order to better guarantee an open, fair and non-discriminatory trading system based on shared and applied rules, which takes greater account of the role and interests of a variety of economic operators, such as SMEs, micro-enterprises and innovative start-ups;
4. Emphasises the importance of building on the decisions agreed at the Ninth Ministerial Conference with a view to making substantive progress at MC10 in Nairobi in December 2015 to enable a quick conclusion of the Doha Round;
5. Believes that trade liberalisation is an important tool to ensure sustainable economic growth and development, but that it needs to be accompanied by appropriate flanking policies encompassing macro- and micro-economic measures, including budget transparency, fiscal policies and tax equity, administrative simplification, education and training, institutional reforms and social policies, so as to maximise and distribute better the benefits of trade reforms and effectively counterbalance any negative effects;
6. Draws attention to the Fifth Aid for Trade Review Conference held in July 2015 in Geneva, entitled 'reducing trade costs for inclusive, sustainable growth' and which focused in particular on the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement;
7. Calls upon all WTO members for speedy ratification and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement so that it can enter into force in time for MC10; considers that this agreement will bring significant benefits to all WTO members, and in particular to developing countries and to relevant economic operators, by enhancing transparency and legal certainty and reducing the administrative costs and the length of customs procedures, which would in turn enable them to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by the growing prevalence of regional and global supply chains and enable SMEs to take advantage of more open markets; points out that capacity building and technical assistance should continue to be made available to developing and least developed countries, and ought to focus on one-stop shops and the simplification of electronic documentation in order to enable them to increase their production capacities so that they can benefit from a bigger share of the value added in global value chains;
8. Encourages the WTO membership to proactively support the WTO's efforts in establishing effective and efficient working links and deeper cooperation with other international organisations whose work has a bearing on world trade talks, in particular the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organisation, and the UN and its agencies and bodies, such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Development Programme and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the IMF, the World Bank and the OECD, in order to ensure mutual support and synergies between trade and non-trade concerns; supports efforts aiming for the adoption of international standards and regulatory cooperation;
9. Calls for thorough consideration of the issue of how better to address non-trade concerns under WTO rules, in order to allow its members to pursue legitimate policy objectives while not hindering market access; stresses, in this connection, that efforts for the adoption of international standards should be strongly supported, and the necessary aid granted to developing countries to enable them to meet such standards;
10. Is convinced that the failure to take into account sufficiently the widely varying economic development levels and specific needs between developing countries, could be an obstacle to adopting effective measures to benefit these countries in accordance with the stated objective of the Doha Round and is to the detriment of those developing countries that are most in need; urges advanced developing countries to take their share of responsibility already during the current round and to make contributions commensurate with their level of development and sectoral competitiveness; stresses, moreover, the importance of using effective criteria to differentiate, by not only taking into account GNP growth, but also indicators such as the economic vulnerability index and the trade and development index;

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11. Believes that it is vital to conclude the longstanding Doha Round with its development mandate fulfilled; urges all WTO members, therefore, to explore all possible options with that end-goal in mind in order to achieve an ambitious, global, balanced and realistic result;
 12. Welcomes the progress made to date on plurilateral initiatives such as the Environmental Goods Agreement and the Information Technology Agreement and on initiatives such as the Trade in Services Agreement; believes that plurilateral agreements can complement and promote the multilateral approach with the ultimate objective being to bring in a critical mass of members and multilateralise them;
 13. Insists that the EU should continue to play a leading role in promoting tangible progress in the ongoing WTO negotiations with a view to the full conclusion of the Doha Development Round in the early future, as well as in facilitating the full participation of LDCs in global trade by acting as a bridge between the various positions of the WTO members;
 14. Stresses the crucial importance of the WTO for regulations-based world trade and as regards implementing and enforcing binding commitments and settling trade disputes, as well as its unique contribution in promoting greater transparency and peer review, notably through the trade policy review mechanism (TPRM);
 15. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of MC10, is promptly updated and, if necessary, is consulted during the 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;
 16. 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;
 17. 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.
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