



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

133rd IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

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Governing Council
Item 10

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5 October 2015

Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(f) 34th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO

Geneva (IPU Headquarters), 1 October 2015

As the body ensuring the smooth functioning of the process known as the *Parliamentary Conference on the WTO*, the Steering Committee of the Conference is composed of representatives of some 25 parliaments and international organizations. The IPU and the European Parliament usually take turns in hosting sessions of the Steering Committee.

The Committee's 34th session took place on IPU premises, on 1 October 2015, and was attended by 57 persons, including 25 members of parliament. The session was held on the heels of the annual WTO Public Forum, in the framework of which the IPU and the European Parliament organized a parliamentary session on the theme *Reducing trade costs: Why speedy legislative action on the Trade Facilitation Agreement is of paramount importance*.

The Steering Committee focused on recent developments in the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, including preparations for the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2015. The Committee also considered arrangements for the next plenary session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, to be held in Geneva, in May 2016.

Mindful of the difficulties faced by the WTO in concluding the Doha Round, the Steering Committee considered it opportune to adopt a political statement, which was meant to provide additional impetus to the ongoing negotiations (see [Annex](#)).

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PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament

Thirty-fourth session of the Steering Committee

1 October 2015, IPU Headquarters, Geneva

STATEMENT

With only a few weeks left before the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC10), we stress the importance of achieving a package of meaningful outcomes in Nairobi. We urge all parties to renew their vigour and move the negotiating process forward. It is vital to conclude the longstanding Doha Round so as to fulfil its development mandate.

We stress the particular importance of taking full account in the negotiating process of the special needs and interests of developing countries, especially LDCs. We underscore the imperative of ensuring that the principle of special and differential treatment for these countries constitutes an integral part of all layers of negotiations.

As legislators entrusted with the task of overseeing international trade negotiations and scrutinizing the implementation of the commitments made by our respective governments, we reiterate our conviction that failure to deliver on the promise of the Bali Package is not an option.

Cognizant of the work that has been carried out in connection with the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) reached in Bali, the Steering Committee calls for the Agreement's speedy ratification so that it can enter into force in time for MC10. Parliaments play a key role in this regard. Their swift action to ratify the Agreement is pivotal for allowing all countries - particularly the least developed ones - to see the promised gains from growing trade and increasing foreign direct investment.

By enhancing transparency and legal certainty, reducing administrative costs and the length of customs procedures, the TFA should enable all parties to benefit fully from the opportunities linked to the growing prevalence of regional and global supply chains and take advantage of more open markets. To help developing countries and LDCs identify their specific priorities, the WTO has set up a TFA Facility, which became operational in 2014. While welcoming this development, we call on WTO Members to disburse funding and assistance to this Facility in a timely manner and in accordance with their commitments.

We reiterate our call on WTO Members to enhance the democratic legitimacy of the WTO by strengthening its parliamentary dimension. In this connection, we emphasize the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation, monitoring and implementation of WTO decisions, and that trade policies are properly scrutinized in the interests of citizens.