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# CANCUN SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Cancún (Mexico), 9 and 12 September 2003

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*Organised jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament with the support of the Mexican Parliament*

## **DECLARATION**

*adopted on 12 September 2003*

1. We, parliamentarians, assembled in Cancún during the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference to discuss matters relating to multilateral trade, are convinced of the need for a parliamentary dimension of the WTO. We have already decided to hold regular parliamentary meetings, initially once a year and on the occasion of WTO Ministerial Conferences.
2. We took the decision to hold such meetings because we believe that the days when foreign policy, and more specifically trade policy was the exclusive domain of the executive branch are over. The WTO is rapidly becoming more than a mere trade organisation, having an ever growing impact on domestic policies. Consequently, we wish to contribute to making it more open, transparent, democratic and responsive to national policy objectives consistent with national sovereignty and international trade obligations.
3. Our objectives are to oversee WTO activities and to promote their effectiveness and fairness, keeping in mind the original objectives of the WTO set in Marrakech. We also seek to promote the transparency of WTO procedures, to improve the dialogue between government negotiators, parliaments and civil society, to build capacity in parliaments in matters of international trade and to exert influence on the direction of discussions within the WTO.
4. We reiterate our commitment to promote free and fair trade that benefits people everywhere, enhances development and reduces poverty. The negotiations in Cancún should be a milestone on the way to implement the Doha agenda. They must deliver a framework for completing it on time and provide outcomes that are necessary to ensure that the commitments and promises made in Doha are respected.
5. The Doha Development Agenda concerns us all. Failure to live up to the commitments made in Doha will have enormous and long-lasting implications for sustainable global economic development. We therefore call on all concerned, Heads of State and government, Ministers and trade negotiators to show vision and leadership and seek to make progress through cooperation.
6. Positive results in the negotiations on agriculture are essential for the success of the WTO Ministerial Conference. We call on the Ministerial Conference to make a commitment to bring to an end all agricultural policies that have contributed to underdevelopment. We invite WTO Members to reaffirm their commitment to paragraph 13 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration and to set forth a clear timetable for agreeing upon the phasing out of all forms of export subsidies and to agree upon substantial improvements in market access, taking into account special and differential treatment.
7. We recognise that agriculture has a multifunctional role which includes food safety, preservation of land, animal welfare, way of life, revitalisation of rural society and rural employment. We invite WTO Members to commit themselves to address those issues through non-trade-distorting means and, in particular, to respond positively to the sectoral initiative on cotton set out in the agenda of the WTO Conference in Cancún

8. At the Doha Conference, agreement was reached on interpreting the TRIPS agreement in ways consistent with public health needs. This will help to improve the present situation in which a third of the world population does not have access to essential medicines. We welcome the recent decision on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and public health as a step on the way to a solution of this contentious issue.

9. We call for the speedy implementation of this agreement through viable, simple and sustainable mechanisms and commit ourselves to introducing legislative changes to this effect. We invite the WTO and its Members to provide technical assistance to countries in need thereof. Moreover, we believe that these measures must be accompanied by the introduction of comprehensive health policies in the countries concerned. Such policies are inseparable from the provision of safe drinking water and education for all, and respect for human rights.

10. Trade in services is an ever-growing market and development of world trade in services is dependent upon meaningful results in the GATS negotiations. However, a cautious approach to liberalisation is required, especially as far as services relating to basic human rights and needs are concerned. There is a need for explicit and democratically formulated national policy objectives, detailed analysis of the consequences of the commitment to be made, and national regulation and measures guaranteeing the accomplishment of the policy objectives desired, including necessary legal control and remedies. In other words, all agreements require an appropriate assessment of their economic, social, cultural and gender impact as well as of their environmental sustainability.

11. All States are sovereign to choose those service sectors they wish to open up to foreign suppliers. Developed countries must be highly responsible when they approach developing countries in pursuit of their own interest. Solutions must be found to questions relating to special interests of developing countries and in particular the LDCs, like development of Mode 4 of service provision and rule making issues. Moreover, developed countries should consider providing assistance to countries seeking to develop a public service sector.

12. Parliaments play a significant role in the peaceful evolution of societies and multilateral relations. As legitimate representatives of our respective peoples, we, members of parliament, have a crucial task to play in international trade that entails communicating with those whom we represent to ensure effective trade policies and providing input for the negotiations that take place here in Cancún, with a view to contributing to their successful conclusion.

13. We therefore call on our respective governments participating in the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference to add the following paragraph to the final declaration: *"Transparency of the WTO should be enhanced by associating parliaments more closely with the activities of the WTO."* Moreover, we call on all WTO Members to include members of parliament in their official delegations to future Ministerial Conferences.

14. We are committed to continuing our endeavours to provide a parliamentary dimension to international trade negotiations and arrangements and, to this end, propose to increase our activities in all parliaments to oversee and influence government policy in this field. We propose to set a date when all parliaments would hold an annual debate on trade related matters, especially with regard to WTO negotiations.

15. We call upon the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament, as joint organisers of this meeting, to give practical shape to our objectives adopted consensually at this Parliamentary Conference. We call upon all parliaments to participate fully in the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. We propose to review progress at our meeting next year.