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Geneva, 10 June 2005

HONG KONG SESSION
OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO
Advance Information

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

Over the last two years, significant progress has been achieved in establishing the parliamentary dimension to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament continue to lead the way in a process known as the **Parliamentary Conference on the WTO**, with sessions held once a year and on the occasion of WTO Ministerial Conferences. The principal objective of the Parliamentary Conference is to enhance external transparency of the WTO and make this inter-governmental organisation accountable to legislators as elected representatives of the people.

I have pleasure in informing you that the next session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO will take place in **Hong Kong, China**, in conjunction with the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, due to be held from 13 to 18 December 2005. The session will follow the organizational pattern of the highly successful parliamentary event held in Cancún two years ago on the occasion of the fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. The parliamentary session in Hong Kong will be held in two parts, on **12 and 15 December 2005** respectively, and will take place at the **Harbour Plaza Hong Kong Hotel** which has appropriate meeting facilities, can provide accommodation for a significant number of parliamentary delegates, and can be easily reached from the Convention Centre where the Ministerial Conference will be taking place.

The agenda and work programme of the Hong Kong session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO will be established by the Conference Steering Committee when it meets in Geneva on 22 and 23 September 2005. You can count on receiving a formal invitation letter, agenda and programme of the Hong Kong session soon thereafter. This does not mean however that such matters as international travel and hotel bookings, as well as Conference accreditation, can be postponed until September - quite the contrary in fact.

We have been informed by the WTO Secretariat that the overall number of official delegates, parliamentarians, civil society representatives and journalists travelling to Hong Kong for the WTO Ministerial Conference and related events will exceed ten thousand. The authorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, as the host Government, have set up a Coordination Office which is responsible for the logistical aspects of the Conference. However, the Coordination Office will provide assistance mainly to those persons who are officially accredited to the WTO Ministerial Conference.

In conformity with past practice, I therefore strongly urge you to see to it that senior members of your Parliament who are active on trade and development issues are included in your country's official delegation to the WTO Ministerial Conference without delay. This is by far the easiest way to ensure that their transportation, visa, accommodation and accreditation needs are taken care of by your Government and the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference Coordination Office in a centralized way. Duly accredited parliamentary delegates will enjoy unrestricted access to the Convention Centre where the Ministerial Conference will be held, and will thus be able to interact with government negotiators. Please note that most governments have already started registering their delegations to the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference and that booking of hotel rooms is well under way.

We know from experience, however, that some members of parliament and accompanying staff will travel to Hong Kong outside the framework of their countries' official national delegations to the WTO Ministerial Conference. All such delegates will have to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements and obtain entry visas for Hong Kong, if necessary.

To facilitate this task, the National People's Congress of China has pre-booked a number of rooms at the Harbour Plaza Hong Kong Hotel where the parliamentary session will be taking place. To obtain a room there, each delegate should fill out the enclosed **hotel reservation form** and return it as soon as possible, and by **15 September 2005** at the latest, **directly to the hotel**, using the contact information on the form. The rooms will be released on a first-come, first-served basis. Due to the extremely high demand for hotel accommodation in Hong Kong at the time of the WTO Conference, no booking can be guaranteed by the hotel beyond this ultimate deadline. Please consult the enclosed **Practical Information Note** for further details.

As regards accreditation formalities, all delegates to the Hong Kong session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO should complete the enclosed **registration form** and return it to the IPU Secretariat by **15 November 2005** at the latest. Security arrangements in Hong Kong will be very tight at the time of the WTO Ministerial Conference. Only persons duly accredited and wearing official WTO Conference badges will have access to the area around the Convention Centre. Access to the Harbour Plaza Hong Kong Hotel will be subject to less restrictions, but will also be controlled. Members of parliament and accompanying staff travelling to Hong Kong outside the framework of their country's official delegation to the WTO Ministerial Conference will have to go through a special "parliamentary" accreditation procedure, which will be handled by the IPU Secretariat. Details of this procedure are outlined in the Practical Information Note.

On behalf of the co-organizers of the Hong Kong session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, I thank you in advance for taking prompt action to make accreditation, accommodation and travel arrangements for your delegates who will travel to Hong Kong next December. Substantive documents pertaining to the session will be forwarded to you in due course after the Steering Committee meeting next September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders B. Johnsson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General