



Pascal Lamy: the WTO system withstood the crisis

Taking the Doha trade liberalisation negotiations to their endgame and monitoring trade protectionism are among the main 2010 objectives of the World Trade Organization, the WTO director-general Pascal Lamy told MEPs on Tuesday.

"The WTO system has resisted the crisis and it should emerge strengthened from its first really serious stress test", Mr Lamy told the EP International Trade Committee.

Parliament's new powers

Mr Lamy said he was happy about the considerable new powers Parliament had gained in the field of international trade with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. This would strengthen the hand of the Union in trade negotiations and make them more democratic but it would also mean greater responsibility for MEPs, he added.

Risks of a jobless recovery

"Now we are starting to see a recovery of trade flows", said Mr Lamy, but "small businesses and regions such as Africa still need attention". The WTO had not seen developed countries withdraw from their "aid for trade" commitments and "governments largely kept markets open", he added. However, there was still a danger of a "jobless recovery igniting protectionist measures".

The Doha endgame

On the Doha trade liberalisation negotiations, Mr Lamy said "despite very strong headwinds we last year managed to keep the boat sailing". He believed the successful banana deal between EU and Latin American producers could give impetus to the Doha talks. He expressed his hope that in 2010 the Doha round can be taken "to the endgame".

Other WTO goals for this year were to keep an eye on trade finance, to monitor trade protectionism and aid for trade commitments, to continue the 30 ongoing WTO accession negotiations and to ensure that trade can play its part in the recovery.

Agriculture, food security, fisheries

To questions on the agriculture and food crises by Georgios Papastamakos (EPP, EL), Yannick Jadot (Greens/EFA, FR) and Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL, DE), Mr Lamy stressed the political reality that the US and the EU would keep their farm subsidies and that the subject of agriculture in the Doha round "will remain full of specificities". There was a need to open trade in agriculture to resolve food security issues, he added.

In reply to David Martin (S&D, UK), he said there was no need for a new definition of the term "developing countries" but it was important to create a fairer trade system. Answering a question by Michael Theurer (ALDE, DE), Mr Lamy underscored that the EU should keep its leadership role in trade negotiations. Fisheries subsidies remained an "extremely sensitive topic", he emphasised.

In the chair: Vital Moreira (S&D, PT)

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