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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Seán Ó Neachtain and Antonio Mussa

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the WTO,
including cultural diversity

European Parliament resolution on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the WTO, including cultural diversity

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference Declaration adopted on 14 November 2001 in Doha,
- having regard to its report on the EU's approach to the WTO Millennium Round,
- having regard to its resolution on the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference,
- A. recalling that the services sector is the key economic sector for the EU, being the largest exporter of services worldwide,
- B. whereas open markets for services could bring advantages for all countries, as open markets bring lower prices for consumers and business,
- C. whereas enhanced provision of services can contribute to the diffusion of know-how and modern technology in developing countries,
- D. whereas the success of the WTO would be damaged without quick concrete results that can assure the poorest nations that the WTO is critical of the economies of all countries, rich and poor,
- E. whereas the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that 'the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity' (Article 22),
- F. whereas UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity stresses 'the specificity of cultural goods and services which, as vectors of identity, values and meaning, must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods' (Article 8), and states that 'market forces alone cannot guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which is the key to sustainable human development' (Article 11),
- 1. Welcomes the Commission's initial offer on GATS as an important part of the Doha negotiations and a positive signal to the WTO membership that the EU is open for business and supports a non-discriminatory rules-based system;
- 2. Recalls that GATS is voluntary and that its principles impose neither privatisation nor deregulation and liberalisation as such on WTO members, but only establish the obligation of non-discrimination between nationals and foreigners when opening up markets;

3. Invites the Commission to consider additional market access in areas such as computer services, professional services, business services, construction and engineering, distribution, tourism and maritime transport;
4. Supports the inclusion of environmental services, in accordance with their classification in the proposal; agrees at the same time to exclude the access to and management of water resources as well as the allocation thereof; considers this as a necessary measure to implement the UN Millennium Declaration with regard to the provision of water supply in developing countries;
5. Supports the Commission in not offering any liberalisation of public services, especially health and education; supports the right of each WTO member to intervene in and regulate clearly-defined public services, and calls for the clarification of those provisions of GATS whose wording has given rise to concern in that regard;
6. Emphasises that cultural goods and services are different from other goods and services and require a different treatment in international trade agreements, setting them apart from standardised mass consumption;
7. Stresses the importance of cultural diversity and the need to respect national and regional diversity and to bring the common cultural heritage to the fore; believes that each Member State should have the legal flexibility to take all the necessary measures in the areas of cultural and audiovisual policy to preserve and promote cultural diversity;
8. Calls on the Commission to maintain the possibility for the Community, its Member States and its regions to preserve and develop their capacity to define and implement policies in the cultural and audiovisual sectors in order to preserve their cultural diversity;
9. Emphasises that, in the context of GATS, movement of natural persons must be limited in time and linked to a specific service contract, to be concluded before their entry into the EU;
10. Recalls that in all these cases EU and national working conditions, minimum wage requirements and any collective wage agreements will continue to apply, and that EU Member States will continue to be able to refuse entry to persons who pose a security threat or are considered liable to abuse the terms of their entry;
11. Invites the Council to support the Commission's proposal;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Member States.