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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

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

by W.G. van Velzen, Ruth Hieronymi and Marielle de Sarnez

on behalf of the PPE-DE 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 approach to the WTO Millennium Round (A5-0062/1999, Schwaiger report),
 - having regard to its resolution on the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference (B5-0691/2001),
 - having regard to Article 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which states that ‘the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’,
 - having regard to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which 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),
- A. whereas the services sector is the key economic sector for the EU, which is the largest exporter of services worldwide,
- B. whereas open service markets have advantages for all countries, as open markets bring benefits in terms of lower prices for consumers and businesses,
- C. whereas enhanced provision of services can contribute to the diffusion of know-how and modern technology in developing countries,
- D. whereas the WTO Doha Round is to focus on a development agenda, and concrete results must therefore be achieved in order to convince the poorest nations that the success of the WTO is critical to the economies of all countries, rich and poor,
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; supports the additional services liberalisation commitments to enhance market access for EU service providers by reducing or eliminating barriers to trade in services;
 2. Recalls that the GATS is voluntary and that its principles do not impose either privatisation or deregulation, or prescribe a particular degree of liberalisation as such for WTO members, but only establish the obligation of non-discrimination and transparency;

3. Supports further opening up of markets in the financial services and telecom sector, the European experience having shown that the abolition of monopolistic structures leads to more customer-orientated services at a reduced price level, while at the same time creating qualified employment;
4. Supports the Commission's offering additional market access in other areas, such as computer services, postal and courier services, energy, professional services, business services, construction and engineering, distribution, tourism and maritime transport;
5. Supports the inclusion of environmental services in so far as they are classified in the proposal; at the same time agrees to exclude access to, and management of, water resources, as well as the allocation thereof; regards this as a necessary measure to implement the UN Millennium Declaration with regard to the provision of water supply in developing countries;
6. Supports the Commission in not making an offer on public services such as health services and education; supports the right of each WTO member to intervene in and regulate clearly defined public services;
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; each Member State should have the legal flexibility to take all necessary measures in the areas of cultural and audiovisual policy to preserve and promote cultural diversity;
8. Recalls that cultural services are not to be compared to most other services and are therefore treated differently in existing agreements; shares the Commission's view that the existing rules on audiovisual services are sufficient; recognises the European audiovisual sector's special role in sustaining cultural pluralism, economic performance and freedom of expression; reaffirms its commitment to the freedom of action in the sphere of audiovisual policy obtained at the Uruguay Round; takes the view that the GATS rules on cultural services, in particular in the audiovisual sector, should not jeopardise the cultural diversity and autonomy of the WTO contracting parties;
9. Supports the Commission in maintaining 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;
10. Underlines the fact that, in the context of GATS, movement of natural persons must be limited in time and under no circumstances constitute access to the employment market; demands to be assured that the EU directives on family reunification do not apply to service providers in this context;
11. 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 to be at risk of abusing the terms of their entry;
12. Welcomes the efforts by the Commission to involve interest groups from all the relevant

service sectors as well as civil society groups;

13. Invites the Council to support the Commission's proposal;

14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Member States.