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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

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

by Nicholas Clegg, Colette Flesch, Elly Plooi-j-van Gorsel, Marieke Sanders-ten Holte and Willy C.E.H. De Clercq

on behalf of the ELDR 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 declaration adopted by the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, adopted on 14 November 2001 in Doha, its report on the EU's approach to the WTO Millennium Round (A5-0062/1999 - Schwaiger report) and its resolution on the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference (B5-0691/2001),
 - A. whereas the EU is the world leader in the services sector, thanks largely to its openness to competition, and open service markets have advantages for all countries as open markets bring lower prices for consumers and business,
 - B. whereas the WTO's Doha round is to focus on a development agenda,
 - C. whereas the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that 'the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity',
 - D. 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' and states that 'market forces alone cannot guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which is the key to sustainable human development',
 - 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 negotiations on trade in services are to be conducted with a view to promoting the economic growth of all trading partners and the development of the developing and least developed countries and that the GATS negotiations should be measured against that overriding goal;
 - 3. Recognises that there is increasing public disquiet concerning the possible effects of trade liberalisation in services on the provision of public services, but considers that the majority of the concerns expressed are misplaced, in that GATS cannot impose privatisation or enforce liberalisation of domestic services, but if national governments volunteer to liberalise particular services, then they cannot exclude foreign service suppliers;
 - 4. Reiterates that the liberalisation of trade in services in GATS does not compromise the

ability of national governments to regulate the standards of public service delivery;

5. Supports further opening up of markets in the financial services and telecommunications sector; believes that the European experience shows that the abolition of monopolistic structures leads to more customer-orientated services at a reduced price level, at the same time creating skilled employment;
6. Welcomes the Commission's announcement not to make commitments in the education and health sectors or in the audiovisual sector, but stresses that this should not be used as a precedent to exclude additional sectors from GATS;
7. Invites the Commission to consider additional market access in other areas, such as computer services, professional services, business services, construction and engineering, distribution, tourism and maritime transport;
8. Supports the inclusion of environmental services insofar as they are classified in the proposal; calls, however, for the exclusion of water services (access, management and allocation) as a necessary measure to implement the UN Millennium Declaration concerning the provision of water supply in developing countries;
9. 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 measures in the areas of cultural and audiovisual policy in order to preserve and promote cultural diversity;
10. Welcomes, in the context of GATS, the Commission's proposal to increase the ability of service professionals from developing countries to move freely within the EU market;
11. Welcomes the efforts by the Commission to involve interest groups of all relevant service sectors as well as civil society groups, to provide some Members of the European Parliament with the GATS EU offers, and to publish those offers in full when submitted to the WTO, as steps towards greater transparency;
12. Calls, however, for further transparency, including full access to EU negotiating documents for all Members of the European Parliament;
13. Invites the Council to support the Commission's proposal;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the EU Member States and all WTO members.