



2020/2114(INI)

2.3.2022

OPINION

of the Committee on International Trade

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

on the EU and the defence of multilateralism
(2020/2114(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on International Trade calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines that an open, inclusive, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system must be a key driver of global trade liberalisation, and must lead to advanced economic growth, competitiveness and innovation, job creation, the improvement of living standards, income growth, the promotion of sustainable economic development and the fight against climate change, thereby strengthening prosperity, peace and security, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); notes furthermore its role in fostering a predictable trade environment through the development of reciprocal, more transparent and fair trade rules and regulations, in a consistent, enforceable and coherent manner; recalls the findings of the report entitled 'EU exports to the world: effects on employment' of November 2021, which found that over 38 million jobs in the EU are supported by exports; calls on the Commission to continue its work in communicating these findings and to raise awareness of the benefits and positive aspects of international trade; believes, however, that there is a need to rebuild trust in multilateral institutions in the face of global challenges, in particular as regards the implementation of common initiatives for the provision of global public goods, and in a context of shifting world power dynamics; reiterates the role the EU has within this process;
2. Regrets the growing tendencies towards protectionism and using trade as a tool of coercion that have developed in parts of the global economy, leading to disruptions and geopolitical tensions; recalls that nationalist economic policies that involve violations of established international trade law rules and spur retaliation by trading partners are the antithesis of our globalised trading system; calls for the further strengthening of the EU's trade enforcement efforts and the development of a toolbox of autonomous trade instruments, such as the anti-coercion instrument, the distortive subsidies instrument and the international procurement instrument, as well as the creation of the post of the Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO), to respond to these emerging challenges; notes the aim to achieve a reformed and properly functioning multilateral rulebook with an effective and functioning dispute settlement system at its core in the World Trade Organization (WTO); stresses the need, however, to remain fully engaged in efforts to reform the WTO with a view to increasing its effectiveness, inclusiveness, transparency and legitimacy as the cornerstone of an open, fair and sustainable global economy based on rules, and to deal with the challenges and risks posed by non-market economies; welcomes in this regard the February 2021 Annex to the Trade Policy Review that outlines a comprehensive approach for the modernisation of the WTO; stresses that for the advancement of rules-based global trade, the effective engagement of the EU must be based on a forward-looking approach to trade;
3. Notes the need for the EU to work closely with like-minded partners, to modernise and equip the WTO with tools to address the trade challenges of the 21st century, including the digital revolution, and the green, fair and sustainable transition, and to engage with all members of the WTO to bring forward a positive agenda for reform and a concrete

work plan by the 12th Ministerial Conference; recognises that EU-US cooperation has been the driving force for progress within multilateral trade negotiations; welcomes, therefore, the statements on WTO reform made by the current US administration, but encourages the United States to present a more detailed policy platform for the organisation's reform and to engage with the EU at the highest levels to find consensus, which could provide a basis for renewed engagement on actionable outcomes; supports a forward-looking transatlantic agenda based on common interests and shared values, aiming to actively contribute to achieving meaningful WTO reform, including its monitoring, negotiating and dispute settlement functions; regrets the stalemate at the WTO Appellate Body, which is depriving the global trading system of an enforceable dispute settlement system; urges all WTO members to engage in finding solutions to restore a fully functioning and independent Appellate Body; welcomes the engagement by the EU with its strategic partners in Latin America, the Indo-Pacific region and Africa as a necessary condition to promote and reform the global trading system; calls on the Commission to take developing countries and making progress towards incorporating their economies into the global trading system into account, while also redefining developing country status;

4. Welcomes the launch of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in June 2021 and the first TTC meeting held in November 2021; considers the TTC to be a crucial opportunity for the EU and the US to cooperate on key global trade, economic and technology issues; believes that transatlantic cooperation, as well as collaboration with international partners, could contribute to keeping the multilateral vision alive, to tackling the current challenges of the multilateral system jointly and to driving forward a common agenda for shared prosperity;
5. Stresses that democratic, legitimate, accountable and transparent global governance should feature greater participation of parliamentary bodies, as directly elected parliamentarians can function as a crucial link between citizens and the multilateral system; emphasises the importance of horizontal and coherent multilateralism, as well as of the work of the joint European Parliament and Inter-Parliamentary Union parliamentary conference on the WTO for this purpose; underlines the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation of the mandates and the implementation of WTO decisions, as well as in negotiations on trade-related matters within other multilateral bodies and institutions; reiterates the need for the EU and all WTO members to enhance their exchanges with stakeholders, including civil society, business organisations and the broader business community; calls on the Commission to deepen its cooperation with all relevant international organisations such as the International Labour Organization, the UN system, the G7, the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and underlines their role in advancing an open, rules-based trading system;
6. Welcomes the WTO's close collaboration with the World Health Organization and other international organisations ensuring that trade plays a positive role in addressing the pandemic and the subsequent crisis, and in supporting the recovery of the global economy; stresses that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that our international institutions have shortcomings; calls on the Commission to explore the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to engage with global partners to address these lessons in the agenda for reform; urges that an ambitious initiative in the area of trade

and health be concluded; takes note of the WTO's ambitions to broaden its mandate in order to acquire greater relevance in the public sphere by means of its increased engagement in issues such as health, sustainability, wealth inequality, gender and women's empowerment, in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement; believes that these will be important steps as part of its reform process, alongside its core functions of establishing multilateral trade rules, reducing trade barriers and providing a means for regulated trade dispute settlement between its members;

7. Calls on the Council to be bolder in its efforts to conclude free trade agreements with third countries; notes that free trade agreements increase economic interactions and dependencies between countries, and can therefore serve as the precursor to more active and ambitious engagement at multilateral level;
8. Stresses that increasing trade tensions have progressively and profoundly reshaped the international and regional trade architecture; believes that the EU must continue to act as a staunch and key defender of multilateralism in the world and avoid actions that undermine these objectives; concludes, however, that the EU must respond to global forces, such as increased fragmentation, trade weaponisation and protectionism, in order to preserve its competitive advantages.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.2.2022
Result of final vote	+: 37 -: 2 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Barry Andrews, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Tiziana Beghin, Geert Bourgeois, Saskia Bricmont, Jordi Cañas, Daniel Caspary, Arnaud Danjean, Paolo De Castro, Emmanouil Fragkos, Markéta Gregorová, Christophe Hansen, Danuta Maria Hübner, Herve Juvin, Karin Karlsbro, Maximilian Krah, Danilo Oscar Lancini, Bernd Lange, Margarida Marques, Gabriel Mato, Emmanuel Maurel, Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó, Samira Rafaela, Catharina Rinzema, Inma Rodríguez-Piñero, Massimiliano Salini, Ernő Schaller-Baross, Helmut Scholz, Sven Simon, Dominik Tarczyński, Mihai Tudose, Kathleen Van Brempt, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, Jörgen Warborn, Iuliu Winkler, Jan Zahradil, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Substitutes present for the final vote	Markus Buchheit, Claudiu Manda, Javier Moreno Sánchez, Manuela Ripa, Joachim Schuster

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

37	+
ECR	Geert Bourgeois, Emmanouil Fragkos, Dominik Tarczyński, Jan Zahradil
ID	Markus Buchheit, Herve Juvin, Maximilian Krah, Danilo Oscar Lancini
NI	Tiziana Beghin, Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó, Ernő Schaller-Baross
PPE	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Daniel Caspary, Arnaud Danjean, Christophe Hansen, Danuta Maria Hübner, Gabriel Mato, Massimiliano Salini, Sven Simon, Jörgen Warborn, Iuliu Winkler, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Renew	Barry Andrews, Jordi Cañas, Karin Karlsbro, Samira Rafaela, Catharina Rinzema, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne
S&D	Paolo De Castro, Bernd Lange, Claudiu Manda, Margarida Marques, Javier Moreno Sánchez, Inma Rodríguez-Piñero, Joachim Schuster, Mihai Tudose, Kathleen Van Brempt

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The Left	Emmanuel Maurel, Helmut Scholz

3	0
Verts/ALE	Saskia Bricmont, Markéta Gregorová, Manuela Ripa

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention