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MISSION REPORT

following the ad hoc delegation to the WTO Public Forum and 52nd session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO), Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 September 2023

Committee on International Trade

Members of the mission:

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Jörgen Warborn

Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou

Inmaculada Rodriguez-Piñero

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Reinhard Bütikofer

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Co-Chair of the Steering Group of the (PCWTO) (S&D),

Co-Chair of Steering Group of the PCWTO (EPP)

(EPP)

(S&D)

(S&D)

(Greens/EFA)

(The Left)

Introduction

The mission's was articulated around the participation of Members to the 2023 edition of the WTO Public Forum, entitled "*It's time for action*", and the organisation of the 52nd meeting of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO), which is co-chaired by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament was, as per standard practice, co-organising with the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) one of the panels of the WTO Public Forum, entitled "*Making Trade Work for Environment – the role of Parliamentarians*". This well-attended panel was the only session of the Forum that provided a parliamentary perspective and enabled Members to exchange, inter alia, with counterparts from other WTO member parliaments.

Members further exchanged with their counterparts in the framework of the 52nd meeting of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO), which focused on preparations for the Abu Dhabi Session of the PCWTO, to be held in conjunction with the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) at the end of February 2024.

In the margins of the WTO Public Forum, Members also held fruitful bilateral meetings with Ambassador João Machado, Permanent Representative of the EU to the WTO (i.e. the EU Ambassador to the WTO), and Ambassador Maria Pagán, Deputy US Trade Representative and Chief of Mission for the Permanent Mission of the US to the WTO (i.e. the US Ambassador to the WTO), as well as Deputy Permanent Representatives of Indonesia and Australia, which allowed for exchanges on more specific topics.

Summary account of meetings

WTO Public Forum

The WTO Public Forum gathers each year around 2000 representatives from civil society, academia, business, the media, governments, parliamentarians and inter-governmental organizations to discuss the latest developments in world trade and propose ways of enhancing the multilateral trading system.

The EP was organising a panel on trade and climate change, a topic which attracted a lot of interest from all participants. Speakers included MEPs Jörgen Warborn and Kathleen Van Brempt, MP Marwan Al Mheiri from United Arab Emirates, and WTO Director for Trade and Environment Mr Hoe Lim. The session was moderated by Elisa Tonda (the Chief of the Resources and Markets Branch of the Industry and Economy Division of the UN Environment Programme), and participants took part in the following discussion with a lot of enthusiasm, which bodes well for the upcoming Parliamentary Session of the PCWTO in Abu Dhabi.

52nd meeting of the Steering Committee of the PCWTO

The well-attended Steering Committee was addressed by the Trade Minister of the United Arab Emirates, H.E. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, the Chairperson of the upcoming MC13. This level of engagement at an early stage was a good sign of the level of involvement of the UAE in the organisation of the Abu Dhabi Session of the PCWTO.

Members at the Steering Committee agreed on an agenda for the upcoming Parliamentary Conference, with a focus on trade and climate change, as well as digital trade.

Bilateral meetings

As usual, Members were briefed by the EU Ambassador on the current state of play of negotiations and possible negotiated outcomes at MC13.

The meeting with the Australian delegation, led by Deputy Ambassador, allowed for detailed discussions on the ongoing e-commerce negotiations, for which Australia act as a co-convener. Launched after MC12 in Buenos Aires, negotiations are progressing well, with the ambition to substantially conclude negotiations by MC13, possibly with the exception of the most contentious issues.

The focus of the meeting with the US Ambassador was on dispute settlement reform, where the Ambassador expressed satisfaction with current progress and level of engagement. Members stressed the need for transatlantic cooperation on WTO reform, and the importance of reaching an agreement at MC13 to restore a fully and properly functioning dispute settlement system.

The meeting with Indonesian Deputy Ambassador allowed for an open and frank discussion on a wide range of issues in a positive atmosphere, both bilateral disputes or difficult dossiers such as the deforestation regulation, but also more broadly on the way forward for the WTO, the role of plurilateral agreements etc.

Conclusions

The participation of our Members to the WTO Public Forum was a welcome opportunity for them to engage with international organisations, civil society and stakeholders, while at the same time making the case for a stronger involvement of parliamentarians in the decision-making and management of trade policy.

It allowed for open and frank discussions with important counterparts and to get a better insight in to what can be achieved at MC13, thereby feeding in to the preparatory work and the organisation of the Abu Dhabi Session of the PCWTO.

As regards follow-up:

- The request to organise a Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in Abu Dhabi and to send an EP delegation to MC13 was authorised by the Conference of Presidents on 19 October 2023. Preparations are now in full swing.
- A draft outcome document of the Parliamentary Conference is being finalised, to be circulated to all Parliaments for their amendments before preparatory discussions in the Steering Committee and adoption by consensus in Abu Dhabi.
- In the meantime, the European Parliament is also, as usual, preparing its own

position ahead of MC13 under Rule 132, aiming for February I Plenary.

Annex: Final programme

**WTO PUBLIC FORUM AND
52nd SESSION OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE PCWTO**

14-15 September 2023, Geneva

PROGRAMME OF EP DELEGATION

Thursday, 14 September 2023

10.00	Briefing by Mr. João Aguiar Machado, EU Ambassador to the WTO
11.00	Meeting with Mr Jeremy Green, Deputy Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO (main focus e-commerce negotiations)
12.00	Participation in the WTO Public Forum Working sessions/Workshops
14.00-14.45	Meeting with Ambassador Maria Pagán, Deputy United States Trade Representative and Chief of Mission (Geneva)
16.00-16.45	Meeting with Ambassador Dandy Iswara, Deputy Permanent Representative (WTO Issues), Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN, WTO
17.00	Participation of MEPs in the WTO Public Forum Parliamentary Session jointly organised by the European Parliament and the IPU <i>"Making trade work for the environment- the role of Parliamentarians"</i>
	<i>Free dinner</i>

Friday, 15 September 2023

10.00-12.00	52nd Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (followed by lunch)
14.00 - 16.00	Participation in the WTO Public Forum Working sessions/Workshops