



2023/2868(RSP)

27.11.2023

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on multilateral negotiations in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in
Abu Dhabi 26-29 February 2024
(2023/2868(RSP))

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on behalf of the Committee on International Trade

European Parliament resolution on multilateral negotiations in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi 26-29 February 2024 (2023/2868(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Marrakesh Agreement of 15 April 1994 establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO),
- having regard to the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the WTO of 14 November 2001¹,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the WTO, in particular those of 25 November 2021 on multilateral negotiations in view of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference², of 29 November 2018 entitled ‘WTO: the way forward’³ and of 28 November 2019 on the crisis of the WTO Appellate Body⁴,
- having regard to the outcome documents adopted by consensus at the Annual Sessions of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO on 7 December 2018 in Geneva⁵ and on 10 December 2017 in Buenos Aires⁶,
- having regard to the results of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference held in Geneva in June 2022 (MC12), which include an outcome document, a series of ministerial decisions and declarations, and an Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies,
- having regard to the results of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference held in Buenos Aires in December 2017 (MC11), which include a series of ministerial decisions and joint statements on electronic commerce, on investment facilitation, on domestic services regulation, and on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), as well as to the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment endorsed on 12 December 2017 in the margins of MC11,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in effect since November 2016,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 February 2021 entitled ‘Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy’ and to its annex

¹ Doha Ministerial Declaration (WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1) of 14 November 2001.

² OJ C 224, 8.6.2022, p. 89.

³ OJ C 363, 28.10.2020, p. 113.

⁴ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 62.

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/158345/outcome_document-final-e.pdf.

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/231517/2017_PCWTO_outcome_EN.pdf.

entitled ‘Reforming the WTO: Towards a sustainable and effective multilateral trading system’ (COM(2021)0066),

- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on International Trade,
- A. whereas the WTO was created to further the liberalisation of trade in goods and services, strengthen multilateralism and foster an open, inclusive, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, in order to improve the welfare of people around the world; whereas the overall objective of EU’s trade policy is to contribute to the harmonious development of world trade, the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade and on foreign direct investment, and the lowering of customs and other barriers; whereas trade is vital and a key instrument for supporting and complementing efforts to advance sustainable growth and improve standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income in accordance with the objective of sustainable development;
- B. whereas a strong, open and inclusive multilateral trading system plays an essential role in reaching global goals on climate change and achieving net zero through, for example, the exchange of the goods and services essential for clean-energy technologies and a circular economy;
- C. whereas the rules-based multilateral trading system is currently under a great deal of pressure, subject to geopolitical tensions and unilateral measures, as well as an unjustified reliance on General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) exceptions by some of its members, which is already resulting in a more fragmented and less predictable context for trade policy; whereas the outcome at MC12 proved that the WTO can still deliver multilateral agreements and respond to emergencies;
- D. whereas the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies agreed at MC12 is the first ever multilateral trade agreement with environmental sustainability at its core, establishing a binding set of global rules to curb the harmful subsidies provided by governments to the fishing sector, as mandated under SDG 14.6; whereas the agreement does not yet include disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, on which negotiations are still ongoing;
- E. whereas as of 11 December 2019, the WTO Appellate Body ceased to be operational, which brought to a standstill the functional, independent and impartial appellate stage; whereas at MC12, WTO members committed to conducting discussions with a view to having a fully and properly functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all WTO members by 2024;
- F. whereas the European Parliament, together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, has for more than 20 years played a crucial role in establishing a parliamentary dimension to the WTO through the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO;
- G. whereas the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) will take place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 26 to 29 February 2024;
1. Reiterates its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and underlines

that a multilateral system to govern trade is essential; calls for a trade agenda based on fair and rules-based trade for the benefit of all, which contributes to sustainable economic growth and prosperity, thereby strengthening peace and security; emphasises the importance of the SDGs, social, environmental and human rights and ensuring that multilaterally agreed and harmonised rules are applied by all;

2. Urges all WTO members to commit to a successful outcome of MC13; believes that MC13 should be the starting point for advancing and modernising the WTO to ensure it can play a role in addressing the challenges of the 21st century, including issues such as climate change and sustainability; urges all WTO members to step up their efforts to focus on tangible outcomes that show that the WTO can address current challenges; welcomes the guidance given by the Senior Officials' Meeting on 22 and 23 October 2023; asks WTO members, in particular, to conclude the second phase of the multilateral agreement on fisheries subsidies and adopt a comprehensive package on institutional reform, including a decision that would lead to a fully functioning dispute settlement system;
3. Considers that it is now a matter of urgency to proceed to a substantive reform of the WTO and that this should be reflected in the outcome of MC13; welcomes all the work that has been carried out in this regard since the last Ministerial Conference; calls on WTO members to adopt a comprehensive package reviewing the monitoring, negotiating, deliberative and dispute settlement functions of the WTO, in which due attention should also be given to the parliamentary dimension of the WTO, with a view to increasing the WTO's effectiveness, inclusiveness, transparency and legitimacy;
4. Welcomes the constructive engagement by all WTO members to restore a fully functioning dispute settlement system; commends the work of the facilitator in steering the process that should lead to a consolidated draft text to be submitted to MC13; calls on members to reach an agreement on the dispute settlement system at MC13; recalls that a binding, two-tier and independent process should remain the core objective;
5. Urges all WTO members which have not yet done so, to swiftly ratify the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, in order for the agreement to enter into force as soon as possible, for which ratification by two thirds of the membership is required; stresses the crucial importance of also reaching an agreement on disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, in order to achieve ocean sustainability;
6. Stresses the need to mainstream the development dimension of the WTO, including through the WTO reform process and through making the special and differential treatment fit for purpose for the 21st century; welcomes, in this context, the decision already taken on the extension of support measures to assist least-developed countries (LDCs) on the path to graduation from LDC status, in order to provide a smooth and sustainable transitional period for the withdrawal of trade preferences;
7. Underlines the need to reinvigorate discussions on State support for industrial sectors within the WTO, with a view to increasing transparency and adapting the WTO rulebook on subsidies in order to respond to contemporary challenges and effectively address negative spillover effects such as overcapacity; takes the view that MC13

should launch a time-limited work programme to allow for deliberation on State intervention in support of industrial sectors, in order to provide recommendations for MC14;

8. Stresses the need to make progress in the agriculture negotiations in order to obtain credible results on issues such as public stockholding for food security purposes, domestic support, market access, cotton, export restrictions and export competition, and strengthening the agricultural sector to respond to contemporary challenges, including rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability;
9. Expects the WTO reform to create an easier path for open plurilateral agreements to be integrated into the multilateral architecture in order to ensure progress in areas not mature enough for the entire membership; invites all WTO members to reflect on a way to develop a new system for enhanced cooperation such as is used in the European Union, and on that basis establish a straightforward mechanism which allows the resulting agreements to be incorporated into the WTO structure;
10. Welcomes the conclusion of the negotiations on the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement in order to create a more transparent, efficient and predictable environment for facilitating cross-border investment and the participation of developing countries in global investment flows; supports the incorporation of this agreement into the WTO rulebook under Annex 4 on Plurilateral Trade Agreements, as established in Article X.9 of the WTO Agreement and considers that this can serve as a model for future plurilateral agreements;
11. Highlights the importance of regulating digital trade, as it currently accounts for 25 % of total trade, both at multilateral and plurilateral level; supports the efforts to find a fair and permanent solution for electronic transmissions related to the moratorium; welcomes and supports the broad membership, ambitious negotiating agenda and progress made to date in the WTO plurilateral negotiations on e-commerce; highlights the importance of the free flow of electronic transmissions, which are fundamental to digital trade and reduce trading costs, increase consumer welfare as well as export competitiveness, and bring significant benefits, particularly to SMEs and developing countries; recalls its position that a potential agreement needs to guarantee market access for e-commerce-related goods and services in third countries, as well as the protection of consumer and labour rights, and facilitate business innovation; stresses that a potential agreement on e-commerce needs to comply with existing as well as future EU legislation related to data flows, data localisation and source code, and that it guarantees sufficient policy space to regulate the digital realm; calls on all partners to fully engage in and support efforts to conclude negotiations by MC13;
12. Recalls the WTO's commitment to MSMEs and recalls that MSMEs account for a substantial part of the global economy and have untapped potential in global value chains; urges members to continue to identify solutions that would help MSMEs increase their participation in world trade, while taking into account the specific needs of developing countries;
13. Believes that the outcome of MC13 should provide an action-based agenda for trade policy supporting the 2030 SDGs and the Paris Agreement; strongly encourages WTO

Members to consider all possible measures to contribute to limiting greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UNFCCC , reinforce alignment with the Paris Agreement and climate neutrality, and enhance cooperation in the WTO on measures adopted domestically; welcomes the constructive discussions carried out in the framework of the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD); emphasises the need to advance the discussion on goods and services that help address environmental and climate challenges; urges the EU to raise awareness about its sustainability legislation such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and deforestation, and explain the motivations behind it to make sure it is recognised as a genuine attempt to make trade more sustainable;

14. Reaffirms the links between gender equality and inclusive development, and emphasises that women's empowerment is key to the eradication of poverty and that simultaneously removing barriers to women's participation in trade and addressing the adverse impacts of current trade rules on women in their multiple roles is critical for economic development; encourages all WTO members to sign the 2017 Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment and urges its signatories to deliver on their commitments; welcomes the establishment of the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender; congratulates the WTO for organising the World Trade Congress on Gender in December 2022, the first international research conference on trade and gender;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of MC13, and is promptly updated and consulted during the 2024 Ministerial Conference;
16. Calls on WTO members to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the WTO and the parliamentary conference; emphasises the importance of the work of the joint European Parliament and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parliamentary Conference on the WTO; stresses the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation and implementation of WTO decisions;
17. Calls on WTO members to enhance the exchange with all stakeholders, including civil society and business organisations, and to step up cooperation with other international organisations such as the International Labour Organization and more broadly the UN system; expects leaders to communicate more at different levels about the benefits of rules-based trade;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Director-General of the World Trade Organization.