



IN THIS ISSUE

[The 2015 Parliamentary Conference on the WTO](#)

Developments at the WTO in 2015

[Trade Negotiations Committee](#)

[Doha Work Programme](#)

[General Council](#)

[Accessions](#)

[New chairpersons](#)

[Trade Policy Reviews](#)

[Trade Facilitation Agreement](#)

[Least developed countries](#)

Conference for African Parliamentarians

EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR

5th Global Review of Aid for Trade, Geneva, July 2015

UN Financing for Development Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2015

UN General Assembly on Post-2015 Agenda, Lima, Peru, September 2015

WTO Public Forum, Geneva, September/October 2015

WTO 10th Ministerial Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, December 2015

The 2015 Parliamentary Conference on the WTO



DG Azevêdo amidst the parliamentarians

On 16-17 February 2015, the WTO hosted the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the European Parliament. This meeting is held annually, and for the third time at the WTO. Around 350 parliamentarians from the 166 IPU Members were welcomed in Geneva. This year, the Conference focused on the WTO's 20th anniversary, and its main theme was: 'Trade as an enabler of peace and better living conditions'.

The Conference was opened by Krister Örnfjäder, the Conference's co-chairman, together with Olli Rehn, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Ambassador Fernando De Mateo, at the time Chairperson of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body, in the afternoon of Monday 16 February. Earlier that day, the IPU had convened with parliamentarians at the Pre-Conference session of the Steering Committee at the IPU Headquarters in Geneva, where amendments to the draft Outcome Document for the Conference were discussed.

Örnfjäder said that the Conference 'should be seen as a bridge linking the House of Parliaments (the IPU) and the House of Trade (the WTO)'. Engaging parliamentarians in multilateral trade gives credibility and effectiveness to the WTO. Parliamentary institutions should use

their constitutional leverage to provide critical input into the WTO accords. Örnfjäder congratulated the WTO on its 20th anniversary, and said that by opening its doors to parliamentarians, it shows its external transparency. Rehn pointed at the increasing focus of the public opinion on trade agreements. Fernando De Mateo stressed the importance for the WTO to be able to count on the support of national parliaments.



Ambassador De Mateo addresses the Conference



DG Azevêdo and SG of the IPU Chungong

The opening was followed by a debate on the substantive theme: 'Trade as an enabler of peace and better living conditions'. Members of parliaments discussed, together with Arancha González, the International Trade Centre's Executive Director, how legislators can make the best possible use of the potential of trade to promote peace and prosperity.

After the discussion session, parliamentarians entered into a debate with WTO officials and negotiators on the current WTO negotiations. The guest speakers at this session were the WTO ambassadors of the European Union (Angelos Pangratis), Switzerland (Remigi Winzap), and Colombia (Gabriel Duque). The participants discussed possible ways how to advance the Doha Round in light of the newly agreed deadline for the Post-Bali Work Program of July 2015 and the challenges that the negotiations are facing.

On 17 February, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo addressed the parliamentarians, and thereafter interacted with the parliamentarians in a question-and-answer session. In his speech, the DG underscored the importance of parliamentary involvement in the work of the WTO. He called upon the legislators to continue supporting the WTO, and encouraged them to ratify the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the amendment to the TRIPS Agreement for developing countries. The former has so far been ratified by 4 Members, the latter still needs 27 more acceptances before it will enter into force. Azevêdo also called upon the parliamentarians to encourage their respective governments to take steps that are necessary for the ratification procedures.

Further, the DG said that 'there is a big increase in the political will behind our work'. It is important that other international trade initiatives that are 'by and large welcome', cannot replace the WTO, where 'everyone has a seat at the table'.

Azevêdo closed his speech by referring to a number of important events that will take place in the WTO's anniversary year, including regional parliamentary conferences in Morocco, Singapore and Mauritius, the Global Review of Aid for Trade in June, the Public Forum in October, and the 10th Ministerial Conference to be held in Nairobi in December of this year.

During a panel discussion in the afternoon, the participants attended a debate that focused on the question how to convey the benefits of the WTO to the wider public, in particular to consumers and young people. The discussion panel was composed of 4 parliamentarians including Faisal Al-Tenaiji, President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU, and Amanda Long, Director-General of Consumers International. The session explored the need to make youth more aware of the role and benefits of trade in their daily lives, and parliamentarians agreed on the need to remove technological barriers to trade.



Intervention by a member of the European Parliament

Finally, a brief session was held on the enactment of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The WTO Secretariat gave an explanation on some technical aspects of the TFA. Kil Jeong-woo, the Rapporteur of the Conference Steering Committee, closed the Conference after the participants adopted an Outcome Document.

In the Outcome Document, the parliamentarians congratulate the WTO and its Members on the 20th anniversary. It underlines the pivotal role the WTO has played in establishing an inclusive world economic order and in promoting an open, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. There is a recognition that the WTO has helped to keep global protectionist pressures in check. The parliamentarians applaud the November decision on the TFA, and say to undertake action to ratify the agreement in due course. Further, the Outcome Document urges Members to come up with a clearly defined Work Program for the remaining Doha Round issues.

Developments at the WTO in 2015

Doha Work Programme

The membership and the WTO can report progress on the Doha Work Programme. On 18 March, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said that, after hearing reports from the chairs of the Negotiating Groups on Agriculture, Non-Agricultural Market Access and Services, Members are 'moving into a solution-finding mode'. He noted steady progress on the understanding of the issues and the Members' various positions. The DG stressed the need to ensure that the interests of least developed countries are sufficiently reflected in the process.

Trade Negotiations Committee

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo told the Trade Negotiations Committee on 27 April that "we still have a long way to go" on concluding a work programme on the remaining Doha Round issues by July, "but we are making progress." "After many years of deadlock we are genuinely breaking new ground," he said. He added: "We have to maintain our focus on what is doable. We have to be prepared to leave our comfort zones. And we will all have to contribute."

General Council

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo at a General Council meeting on 5 May launched the logo for the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference, noting that the logo was being launched simultaneously by the Kenyan government in Nairobi. He expressed the hope that "each time we see this logo, it will remind us of the many people in Africa, and all over the world, who are counting on us to deliver substantive outcomes in Nairobi which will support much-needed global growth and development."

Accessions

Seychelles' accession was finalized by President James' act of signing the Instrument of Acceptance of the Accession Protocol on 25 March. The day before, the National Assembly of Seychelles had unanimously ratified the WTO Protocol of Accession. On 26 April 2015, Seychelles membership to the WTO will become effective, making it the 161st Member. Seychelles applied for WTO membership in May 1995.



DG Azevêdo thanks Ambassador Fried, the outgoing chairperson of the General Council

New chairpersons

New chairpersons have been elected for the upcoming year. On 20 February, in the presence of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando de Mateo was elected chairperson of the General Council. Ambassador Harald Neple will succeed Ambassador De Mateo as chairperson of the Dispute Settlement Body. Ambassador Héctor Casanueva chairs the Goods Council committees as of 26 March. New chairpersons have also been appointed in the committees of the Goods Council.

Trade Policy Reviews

The Trade Policy Reviews (TPR) of the following Members have been held: [Barbados](#), [Brunei Darussalam](#), [Japan](#), [Pakistan](#) and [Australia](#). You will find a link to the Secretariat's reports that are made available online, when you click on the Member.

Trade Facilitation Agreement

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) has thus far been ratified by four Members. At the WTO's Preparatory Committee on Trade Facilitation held 24 March, more than a dozen other Members indicated that their national ratification processes of the Agreement had commenced. Many delegations expressed their hope that the TFA will be ratified by two third of the Members by the time of the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, which will be held 15-18 December 2015.

Least-developed Countries



President James signs the Instrument of Acceptance

DG Azevêdo met with Least-developed Countries (LDC) Group Ambassadors and Experts at a retreat meeting in Montreux on 18 February. He denoted 'good progress' in the implementation of the Bali decisions for LDCs. Particularly the operationalization of the LDC Services Waiver is to be mentioned in this regard. Members convened on 5 February at a high-level meeting of the WTO Services Council to materialize the Bali decision, which aims to give LDCs preferential treatment in certain services sectors in developing and developed countries. At the meeting, over 25 Members indicated services sectors and modes of supply from LDCs to which they would give preferential treatment.



Conference for African Parliamentarians

The Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization was signed in Marrakesh in April 1994. Twenty years after this agreement gave birth to the WTO, Marrakesh served on 8-9 April 2015 as the perfect venue to celebrate the WTO's anniversary. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo convened with the Prime Minister of Morocco, several ministers, Speakers of African parliaments and African parliamentarians. The Conference focused in particular on the ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.



DG Azevêdo in discussion in Marrakesh

Azevêdo attended the opening ceremony and a subsequent discussion session entitled: 'The Multilateral Trade System from Marrakesh to Nairobi: Outcomes and Perspectives' on 8 March. The opening ceremony was also attended by Abdel-Ilah Benkiran, the Prime Minister of Morocco, the Presidents of the Moroccan House of Representatives and House of Counsellors, and the Moroccan Minister of Industry, Commerce, Investment and the Digital Economy.

The DG said that the WTO 'has achieved a great deal' since Marrakesh, immediately adding that 'there is much, much more to do'. Azevêdo underlined the importance of Africa in the multilateral trading system. He recalled that without the help of the African Members, the Bali Conference could not have succeeded. The Bali decisions brought significant progress for LDCs. The DG was pleased to mention that on 25 February, 25 Members indicated services sectors and modes of supply where they would grant preferential treatment to LDCs, and that, for the first time, a Ministerial Conference will be held in Africa (Nairobi, 15-18 December 2015).

Further, Azevêdo urged the parliamentarians to ratify the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The agreement will only enter into force if two thirds of the Members have ratified it in line with their

domestic procedures. It is estimated that the TFA will reduce trade costs by up to 15% in developing countries. Ratification is of particular importance to Africa, where the costs of customs procedures are on average 30% higher than the global average. Similarly, the DG called upon the African Members to ratify the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health that also needs approval of two thirds of the Membership, and only has been ratified by over half of the Members so far. More than 30 African Members are still to ratify this Agreement.



DG Azevêdo delivers his speech

Subsequently, two sessions were held for parliamentarians on the TFA and its benefits for African countries and their business sectors. On the benefits for business, parliamentarians discussed with representatives from the private sector (CGEM, IATA, IRU, and ICC). The implications of the TFA for the African countries were discussed with a panel of Trade Ministers, the Ambassador of Morocco and the DG of Morocco Customs.

The second day of the Conference was entirely devoted to the TFA and included a number of technical discussion sessions on the following themes: TFA's substantive obligations, special provisions for developing and LDCs, and support for the implementation of the TFA. The Conference was closed with a stocktaking session.



FOLLOW THE WTO



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/WTO/114219791924342>

http://twitter.com/wto_omc

<http://www.youtube.com/user/WTO>

http://www.flickr.com/photos/world_trade_organization

Social Media Box

We would like to hear from you:

World Trade Organization
Information and External Relations Division

Rue de Lausanne 154,
1211 Geneva, Switzerland

wto4mps@wto.org
www.wto.org

To subscribe/ unsubscribe to this Newsletter please contact us
at wto4mps@wto.org