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Geneva, 11 February 2005

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE WTO PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM
Geneva, 22 April 2005

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

Over recent years, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has established a tradition of holding annual public symposia where participants from governments, parliaments, civil society, the business sector, academia and the media jointly reflect upon the functioning of the multilateral trading system and analyse the institutional state of the WTO. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has been associated with WTO public symposia on a number of occasions, having organized parliamentary events within their overall programme.

We have been recently informed that this year's WTO Public Symposium will take place from 20 to 22 April. The 2005 Symposium takes on special significance as it coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the WTO, which is reflected in its general theme: "WTO after 10 Years: Global Problems and Multilateral Solutions".

You are no doubt aware of the efforts of the IPU and the European Parliament to provide a meaningful parliamentary dimension to the WTO through a process known as the *Parliamentary Conference on the WTO*, the sessions of which are held annually. With a view to the next such session, due to take place in Hong Kong in December 2005 in connection with the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, the IPU has taken the initiative of organizing an interactive Parliamentary Panel on 22 April 2005 within the framework of this year's WTO Public Symposium.

The Parliamentary Panel will focus on the theme *The WTO at 10. The perceived loss of "sovereignty" due to WTO accords: should parliamentarians be concerned?* This issue should be of special interest to legislators as elected representatives of the people. At the same time, it is of great importance to the WTO because of its mandate as an international rules-setting body. The authors of the recent *Report on the Future of the WTO: Addressing Institutional Challenges in the New Millennium*, prepared by a Consultative Board to the WTO Director-General, pointed out that numerous misconceptions existed in this regard. The interactive Panel will consider the conclusions of the Report from a parliamentary perspective, thus providing a further input to the public debate on this sensitive issue.

The Parliamentary Panel will take place on Friday, 22 April 2005, from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. in room CR I at WTO headquarters. It will be open to all parliamentarians and other participants attending the WTO Symposium. A detailed programme of the Panel will be posted on the IPU Web site at <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/wto-symp05.htm> by mid-March.

I would much appreciate it if information about this year's WTO Public Symposium and the Parliamentary Panel, to be held within the framework of its programme on 22 April, could be brought to the attention of those bodies and individual members of your Parliament who specialize in questions of international trade and follow the activities of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO.

Please note that, in conformity with WTO practice, all participants in the Symposium are responsible for their own visa, travel and accommodation arrangements in Geneva. All delegates are also expected to register themselves for the Symposium using the enclosed registration form, which they should return by e-mail or fax directly to the WTO Secretariat before the official deadline of 8 April 2005. The form can also be downloaded electronically from the WTO Web site at <http://www.wto.org/>.

May I emphasize that the IPU Secretariat is not dealing with logistical matters relating to the organization of the WTO Public Symposium. For practical reasons, including the holding of the 112th IPU Assembly in Manila in the first part of April 2005, the IPU Secretariat is absolutely not in a position to help your delegates with accommodation and other practical arrangements in Geneva, which remain the sole responsibility of each participant.

At the same time, may I take this opportunity to reiterate our standing invitation to all members of parliament travelling to Geneva to visit the new Headquarters of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Situated not far away from the WTO, our building bears the name "The House of Parliaments" and its doors are always open to its real owners - the elected representatives of the people.

I look forward to receiving the names of the representatives of your Parliament who will participate in the WTO Symposium and the Parliamentary Panel next April.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders B. Johnsson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General