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2018 ANNUAL SESSION OF THE  
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO  
***WTO- the way forward***

Geneva, 6-7 December 2018

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*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament  
(WTO Headquarters, Room CR1)*

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**PRELIMINARY DRAFT OUTCOME DOCUMENT**

***Submitted by Mrs. Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero Fernández (European Parliament)***

*Parliaments are invited to submit their amendments to the draft in writing to the IPU Secretariat by 15 November 2018. The Conference Steering Committee will review the proposed amendments at its pre-Conference session on 6 December and elaborate a revised draft, to be submitted for adoption by the Conference as a whole at its concluding sitting on 7 December 2018.*

1. The WTO has since its creation played a pivotal role in strengthening multilateralism, establishing an inclusive world economic order and promoting an open, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. We remain convinced that a fair and equitable international trading system, based on free and fair trade for the benefit of all, helps foment global economic growth and sustainable economic development, creating jobs and ensuring welfare. We need to shape globalization with global rules, making sure that it is for the benefit of all countries and citizens.
2. However, the rules-based multilateral trading system is facing its deepest crisis since the creation of the WTO, with its negotiating function almost stalled, looming trade wars and the appointment of new members on the Appellate Body being blocked. This threatens the basic functions of the organization in setting essential rules and structure for international trade and in delivering the most effective and developed dispute settlement mechanism of any multilateral organization.
3. The crisis could deepen further in the coming months if more unilateral measures are threatened and imposed, and the stalemate at the Appellate Body, which can only function in its current setting until December 2019, remains. We therefore urge all Members to fully respect the rules of the WTO, while urgently finding a solution for the dispute settlement mechanism, for example through proposing transitional rules for outgoing members or maximum times allowed before the publication of a report, guaranteeing its independence while ensuring that rulings remain within the rights and obligations of the Appellate Body.
4. We further believe that it is a matter of urgency to proceed to the modernization of the WTO in the light of the latest developments, and to fundamentally review several aspects of the functioning of the WTO with a view to increasing both its effectiveness and its legitimacy. This includes: 1) a more flexible, yet inclusive, negotiating process, addressing gaps in the rulebook leading to distortion; 2) making sure that the WTO is ready to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century trade realities and at the same time tackling the outstanding issues of the Doha Development Agenda, such as finding a permanent solution for public stockholding; 3) reinforcing the monitoring role of the WTO through empowered and more streamlined committees and a reinforced secretariat, as well as its capacity to provide incentives for compliance with the WTO rules.
5. Technological development provides for new opportunities for international trade and has the potential to substantially reduce the costs of transactions, but it will also fundamentally change the way we trade. We are still in the early phases of transformation where digitalization, robots,

artificial intelligence, the internet of things and 3D printing will revolutionize how we produce, work, move and consume. We need to make sure that the global trading system is ready to face this new reality, with policies that really benefit the people, and with sufficient investment in infrastructure, especially in developing countries.

6. We fully believe that trade has to play an important role in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is crucial in the fight against climate change. Beyond the negotiations on fisheries subsidies, the WTO must now define more concrete actions that need to be taken in order to do so. We firmly believe WTO agreements should help preserve and promote high social and environmental standards globally.

7. As expressed in SDG5, there are established links between gender equality and inclusive development. Women's empowerment is key to the eradication of poverty and removing barriers to women's participation in trade is critical for economic development. We welcome the increased focus of the WTO on issues related to trade and gender, and encourage all 121 signatories to the 2017 Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment to deliver on their commitments.

8. We call on WTO members to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the WTO, establishing a formal working relationship with the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. In this regard, we stress the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to deliberations and are involved in the shaping and implementation of WTO decisions, and that trade policies are properly scrutinized in the interests of their citizens.