

Presentation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) European Parliament

Post-Bali agenda: where does parliamentary oversight fit in?

Monday 16 February 2015, WTO Geneva

My presentation articulated around 3 main points:

Keep the Negotiations on Track – how?

You will know where we are:

- Bali was the first multilateral agreement in 2 decades.
- We faced a very dangerous challenge of implementation of the Bali decisions in July 2014.
- A solution was found in November 2014.
- In Davos, the Ministers required to move on 2 solutions which are: doable, realistic and pragmatic. A recalibration is needed.
- Our clear objectives are now a Work Programme by end of July 2015 that should be detailed enough to allow through a quick negotiation to finish DDA by December.
- The challenge:
- Starting point is the mandate and existing texts.
- However world has changed and many of these texts are unacceptable for developed and developing countries
- thus we start from an existing agenda which is impossible
- we need to extract/identify what is really doable in each area
- then create the appropriate process (inclusiveness, transparency etc.) and the right balance of interests in order to have the right balance needed to converge on what is doable from the DDA.
- We need to fully preserve its development dimensions.
- Overall, the challenge is very difficult but not impossible.

What is really at stake?

- Beyond the specifics, in 2011 the organisation faced a complete failure.
- We reached Bali through a process of transformation of what the organisation and the way it works.
- The lessons of that transformation are in fact applied now for the WP and the DDA.
- The world of trade negotiations and the political attention is dominated by the big bilaterals and plurilaterals outside of the WTO.

- Now the WTO has a significant, if not ambitious multilateral agenda with the WP and the DDA and also has a very substantive plurilateral agenda (ITA, TiSA and EGA). It also has the spirit of Bali that proved that the WTO can deliver.
- A big change is at stake. During two decades the WTO has been practically unable to deliver and the trade agenda moved away from the WTO.
- The WTO is in an effort to consolidate its ability to deliver building on the Bali turning point from this point of view.
- The WTO that can deliver makes it easier to rebalance the pyramid of the relations between multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral negotiations and deals.
- It can also focus attention to the private sector, the direction of which is direction proportional to the credibility of a success of the WTO negotiations and its content of course
- Important to keep the plurilaterals in WTO/Geneva as they should be. The complexity of the world requires a more flexible approach on plurilaterals which should be valuable complements to multilateralism.
- This cannot happen unless the WTO delivers and the DDA deal is successful.
- In fact, it would be a deal much bigger than its commercial value as it would be a way to rebalance with plurilaterals and bilaterals. The most important aspect of interest is the long term systemic interest for all Members.
- At the same time there should be no mistake a deal needs to be commercially meaningful and thus supported by the private sector.

The Long Term Considerations beyond the specifics and the short term agenda

- Trade policy increasingly needs the legitimacy of public opinion.
- WTO is the only multilateral option.
- Its core principles remain valid as always and their legitimacy will be increasing: national treatment, MFN, transparency, adequate "policy space" for different categories of Members, respect for important policy objectives for the global community and with high global legitimacy (environment, public health, development etc).
- Overall the WTO is best placed for global rules on a level playing field whilst respecting complex political sensitivities of Members.
- Furthermore the WTO is key to keeping protectionism in check (reports, TPR, PR pressure, dispute settlement).
- The Members of Parliament have an increasingly important role. Public debate on trade cannot be fed by executive structures. It is the parliaments that will insert, in the correct way, the trade policy into the political debate.
- It is important to deliver the correct argument and to keep focus and build political public opinion and private sector priority to the WTO both to tasks at hand and to the long-term effort of recovery of this crucial organisation.

Conclusion

Since 2011 the organisation is in a double effort of recovery that merits attention and requires, in order to succeed, recognition of political priority in the capitals.