



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

5, CHEMIN DU POMMIER  
CASE POSTALE 330  
1218 LE GRAND-SACONNEX / GENÈVE (SUISSE)

TELEPHONE (41.22) 919 41 50 - FAX (41.22) 919 41 60 - E-MAIL [postbox@mail.ipu.org](mailto:postbox@mail.ipu.org)  
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS : INTERPARLEMENT GENEVE

Geneva, 23 September 2008

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE ANNUAL 2008 SESSION  
OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO**  
*Geneva, 11 - 12 September 2008*

Dear Madam President,  
Dear Mr. President,

It gives me pleasure to forward to you a copy of the Outcome Document adopted at the closing session of the annual 2008 session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, which was organised jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament in Geneva on 11 and 12 September 2008.

The session was attended by some 430 participants and observers from 87 countries and 13 international organizations, including 245 members of parliament. Government representatives of 34 sovereign States from among WTO members attended the session in an observer capacity.

The delegates approved a series of amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, with a view to establishing a mechanism for rotating the Steering Committee seats among different national parliaments. An updated version of the Rules of Procedure is enclosed. The session also adopted a text of the Guidelines for relations between governments and parliaments on international trade issues, a copy of which you will also find enclosed as a recommendation for action.

The governing bodies of the IPU will give due consideration to the conclusions and recommendations set out in the Outcome Document of the session, when they next meet in Geneva in mid-October 2008. Meanwhile, I would like to thank you in advance for any steps you may take in order to make the session's documents known to the members of your Parliament who deal with questions of international trade.

Yours sincerely,

Anders B. Johansson  
Secretary General

---

# ANNUAL 2008 SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Geneva, 11-12 September 2008

---

*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament*

## OUTCOME DOCUMENT *adopted by consensus on 12 September 2008*

1. We, parliamentarians assembled in Geneva for the annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, are disappointed and concerned about the failure of the WTO ministerial meetings convened in Geneva at the end of July 2008. The establishment of modalities for agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA) could have been a breakthrough - albeit not perfect - towards the conclusion of the Doha Round.
2. We understand the difficulties of a Single Undertaking, and we are encouraged that substantial progress was made to reach that goal, bringing WTO members close to finalizing the agreement. Solutions have been found to a very large number of problems which had remained intractable for years, even though the intensive negotiations foundered on the extent to which developing countries would be able to raise tariffs to protect farmers from import surges under a "special safeguard mechanism" (SSM), and some other issues remained unsolved. We recognize that there are differences in views and that the right balance between the different interests has obviously not been struck; we call attention to the need to continue to give priority to the vital interests of developing countries in keeping with the common commitment of all WTO members to a "development round".
3. We reaffirm our commitment to the multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO, which contributes to enhanced security, transparency and stability in international trade and to a better management of globalisation through multilateral rules and disciplines and the judicial settlement of disputes. The world needs more than ever a fair, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, which is the most effective means of expanding and managing trade for the benefit of all, especially the developing countries.
4. In the current context, characterised by the soaring prices of raw materials and agricultural products, a successful conclusion of the Doha Round could be the robust stabilizing factor needed by a world increasingly worried about financial and economic crises and an important parameter in stimulating worldwide economic growth, development and employment. This is even more urgent in order to address new global challenges relating to food security, energy and climate change. Furthermore, it would strongly contribute to the Millennium Development Goals and to the integration of developing countries into the global trading system.
5. The costs of failure of the WTO negotiations would include: the loss of possible welfare gains from new WTO reforms; the serious threat of undermining the credibility of the international trading system and the WTO; the risk of expanding trade protectionism and that WTO members replace multilateralism with bilateral and regional agreements. The poorest and weakest members, who benefit among others from a strong multilateral rules-based system, would be the most disadvantaged.

6. We emphasize that the Doha Round should deliver on development, including duty free and quota access of LDCs to all developed country markets - substantially reducing agricultural subsidies - aid for trade, trade facilitation, and special and differential treatment, as well as better rules that allow for the necessary policy space to pursue sustainable development goals. Developing countries would not be able to achieve these elements at the same level in the framework of fragmented regional and bilateral deals. We believe that special attention must be paid to the responsibility of the developed countries to assist those developing countries and LDCs which need support through trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building.

7. We encourage WTO members to preserve the positive achievements made in all the areas of the talks, which should not be wasted, and to restart the negotiations as soon as possible on the basis of what has been achieved so far, showing flexibility and readiness to be constructive and positively engaged to find a resolution that is beneficial to all.

8. The WTO will need to engage in institutional reform aimed at improving its functioning, and enhancing its accountability and democratic legitimacy. We reiterate that the negotiations process should be based on a bottom-up, transparent and inclusive approach and that consensus must be preserved as a cornerstone of WTO decision-making. Moreover, we call for greater coherence between the objectives and rules of the WTO and the commitments made under other international conventions and agreements.

9. We underscore the importance of making the WTO a truly universal organization and call for the removal of political barriers that stand in the way of ensuring its inclusiveness and universal membership. Therefore, we invite all WTO members to facilitate and accelerate the accession process for developing countries. These countries should not be obliged to accept concessions that are incompatible with their level of development and that go beyond prevailing WTO rules. In particular, the accession process for LDCs should be carried out in accordance with the Guidelines on accession of LDCs issued by the WTO General Council.

10. We reiterate our commitment to provide a strong and effective parliamentary dimension to the WTO: the days when trade policy was the exclusive domain of the executive branch are over. The negotiation of future multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements must fully involve the parliaments in order to preserve transparency and parliamentary scrutiny in accordance with the laws of each WTO member.

11. We believe it is crucial for parliaments to exercise ever more vigorously and effectively their constitutional functions of oversight and scrutiny of government action, notably in the area of international trade. As parliamentarians, we are committed to play a far greater role than ever before in overseeing WTO activities and promoting the fairness of the trade liberalization process. It remains our joint responsibility, as members of parliament representing the interests of the people, to oversee government action in the field of international trade and promote fairness of trade liberalization.

12. We remind government negotiators of the commitments they made at the launch of the Round. What we now need is real leadership and courage. We are committed to doing our part. We urge our government negotiators to close the deal, that is on the table since July, before the end of the year so that the Doha Development Round can be concluded in 2009, with an outcome that gives real meaning to development and secures a balance of benefits to all members.

---

# PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

---

*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament*

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

*adopted on 26 November 2004, amended on 12 September 2008*

The days when foreign policy, and more specifically trade policy was the exclusive domain of the executive branch are over. The WTO is rapidly becoming more than a trade organisation, having an ever growing impact on domestic policies and the daily life of citizens.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament are therefore jointly organising a Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (hereinafter the Conference) that will meet at least once a year and on the occasion of WTO Ministerial Conferences. The Conference is an official parliamentary event that is open to the public.

### **ARTICLE 1 - Objectives**

- 1.1 The Conference is a forum for the exchange of opinions, information and experience, as well as for the promotion of common action on topics related to the role of parliaments and the organisation of parliamentary functions in the area of international trade issues.
- 1.2 The Conference seeks to promote free and fair trade that benefits people everywhere, enhances development and reduces poverty.
- 1.3 The Conference will provide a parliamentary dimension to the WTO by:
  - (a) overseeing WTO activities and promoting their effectiveness and fairness – keeping in mind the original objectives of the WTO set in Marrakech;
  - (b) promoting the transparency of WTO procedures and improving the dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; *and*
  - (c) building capacity in parliaments in matters of international trade and exerting influence on the direction of discussions within the WTO.

### **ARTICLE 2 - Composition**

- 2.1 Participants in the Conference are
  - delegations designated by parliaments of sovereign States that are members of the WTO;
  - delegations designated by IPU Member Parliaments from countries that are not represented in the WTO; *and*
  - delegations designated by the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.
- 2.2 Observers to the Conference will be
  - Representatives of international organisations and others who are concerned by issues of international trade and specifically invited by the Steering Committee on the basis of a list that has been approved jointly by the co-organisers; *and*
  - representatives of governments of sovereign States that are members of the WTO.

2.3 The event will also be open to other persons with a specific interest in international trade questions. These persons may follow the work of the Conference without intervening in its proceedings and will have no speaking rights. They will be issued a security badge bearing their name only. They will not receive an official invitation or be accredited to the event.

### **ARTICLE 3 - Presidency**

3.1 The Conference is presided over jointly by the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the President of the European Parliament, or their substitutes.

3.2 The Presidents shall open, suspend and close the sittings, direct the work of the Conference, see that the Rules are observed, call upon speakers, put questions for decision, make known the results of decisions and declare the Conference closed. The decisions of the Presidents on these matters shall be final and shall be accepted without debate.

3.3 The Presidents shall decide on all matters not covered by these Rules, if necessary after having taken the advice of the Steering Committee.

### **ARTICLE 4 - Steering Committee and Secretariat**

4.1 The Steering Committee is jointly established by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament and is composed of representatives of parliaments of sovereign States, of the IPU and the European Parliament as the Conference co-organizers, of selected other regional and international parliamentary assemblies and structures, and of the WTO Secretariat.

4.2 The Steering Committee is responsible for all matters relating to the organisation of the Conference and shall take decisions on the basis of consensus. All decisions taken by the Steering Committee shall, as appropriate, be circulated in writing and approved before the end of each meeting.

4.3 Membership in the Steering Committee shall be institutional, with every parliament or organization having the right to choose its representative(s). In the interest of consistency in the work of the Steering Committee, parliaments and organizations shall endeavour to ensure that, as far as possible, the person(s) who represented them in previous sessions of the Committee continue to take part in subsequent sessions.

4.4 When more than one representative of a national parliament takes part in a session of the Steering Committee, only one member of parliament per delegation shall be part of the decision-making process.

4.5 Changes in the composition of the Steering Committee shall be proposed jointly by the IPU and the European Parliament, as the Conference co-organizers, subject to approval by the Steering Committee as a whole. Where possible, equitable geographical distribution shall be taken into consideration.

4.6 National parliaments shall hold a seat on the Steering Committee for a period of four years. However, the Steering Committee may invite a given parliament to hold its seat on the Steering Committee for another term. The rotation shall be scheduled in such a way that no more than half of the parliaments representing a given geographical region shall be replaced at any one time.

4.7 The definition of geographical regions for the purpose of rotation shall be established by the Steering Committee.

4.8 The Conference and the Steering Committee are assisted in their activities by the secretariats of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament.

#### **ARTICLE 5 - Agenda**

5.1 The Conference decides on its agenda on the basis of a proposal from the Steering Committee, which shall be communicated to the participants at least one month before the opening of each plenary session.

#### **ARTICLE 6 - Speaking rights and decisions**

6.1 Participants and observers have the same speaking rights.

6.2 Priority to speak shall be given to participants wishing to make a procedural motion which shall have priority over the substantive questions.

6.3 The Conference shall take all decisions by consensus of the delegations of participants. Conference decisions shall be taken after due notice has been given by the President.

#### **ARTICLE 7 - Outcome of the Conference**

7.1 The draft outcome document of the Conference shall be prepared by the Steering Committee with the assistance of one or more rapporteurs and communicated to the participants sufficiently in advance.

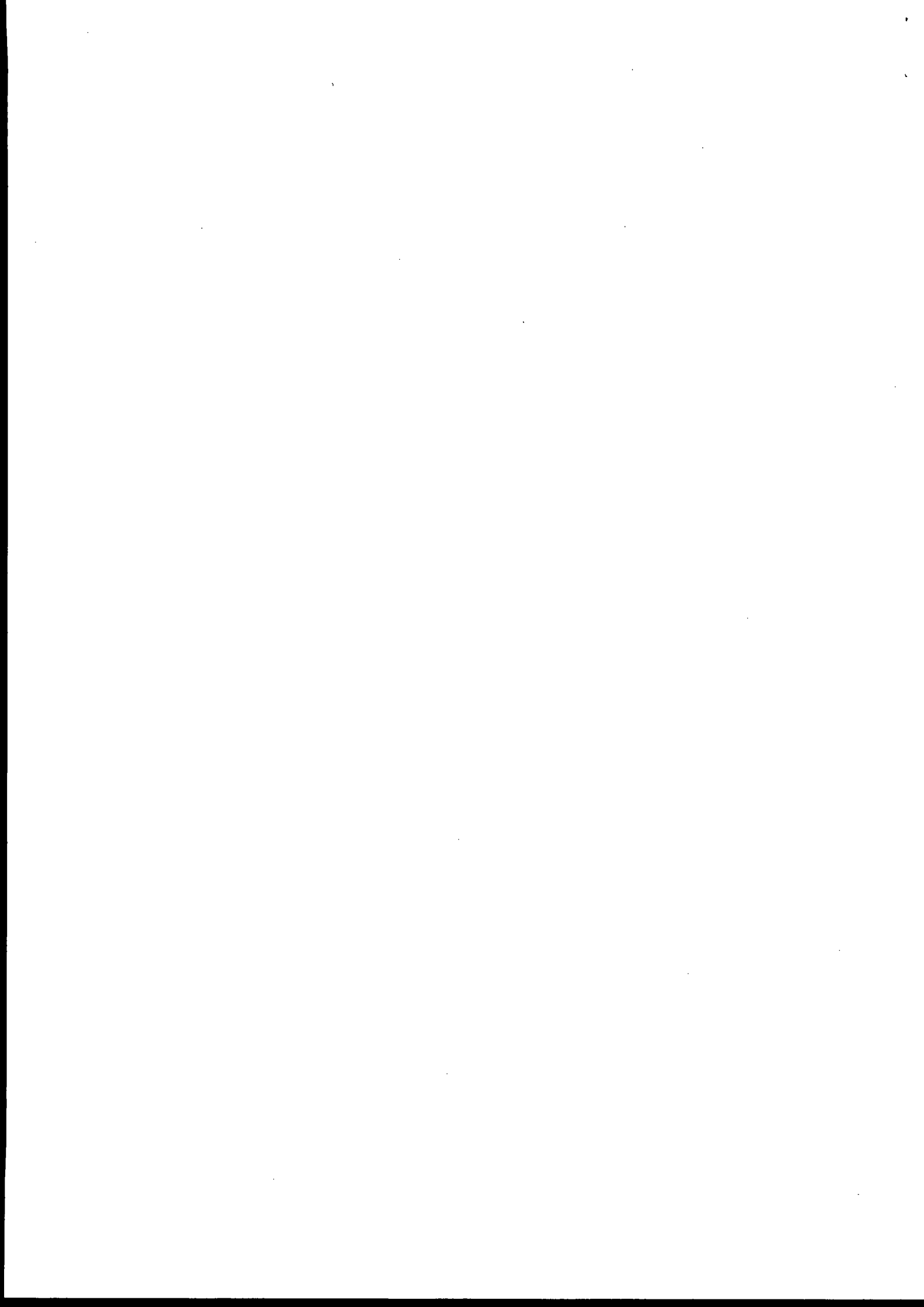
7.2 Amendments to the draft outcome document shall be presented by the delegations as defined in Article 2.1 or by rapporteurs in English or in French with the amended parts clearly marked. Amendments shall relate directly to the text which they seek to amend. They may only call for an addition, a deletion or an alteration with regard to the initial draft, without having the effect of changing its scope or nature. Amendments shall be submitted before the deadline set by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall decide on the admissibility of amendments.

#### **ARTICLE 8 - Adoption and amendment to the Rules**

8.1 The Conference shall adopt and amend the Rules.

8.2 Any proposal to amend the Rules of the Conference shall be formulated in writing and sent to the Secretariat of the Conference at least three months before the next meeting of the Conference. The Secretariat shall immediately communicate such proposals to the members of the Steering Committee as well as to the delegations of the Conference. It shall also communicate any proposal for sub-amendments at least one month before the next meeting of the Conference.

8.3 The Conference shall decide on any proposal to amend the Rules after hearing the opinion of the Steering Committee, including on their admissibility.



---

# ANNUAL 2008 SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE WTO

Geneva, 11-12 September 2008

---

*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament*

## GUIDELINES FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND PARLIAMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE ISSUES

*adopted by consensus on 12 September 2008*

The purpose of the adoption of guidelines for relations between governments and parliaments in international trade issues is to provide all the national parliaments with the opportunity to scrutinise and have an influence on governments' trade policy. These guidelines apply to international trade negotiations in the broader sense, i.e. both to multilateral and bilateral frameworks. It is up to each parliament to decide the extent to which the guidelines should be implemented.

Three elements in relations between government and parliament can be pointed out which will help to ensure that the national parliaments gain an influence on trade policy.

These three elements are the quantity and quality of information to the parliament, the timing of information exchange, and finally the opportunities that the parliament has to use the information it has received to gain an influence on trade policy.

The following basic principles can be recommended on the basis of the above:

- The parliament shall receive relevant information on trade initiatives from the government in good time so that the parliament has an opportunity to take them into consideration before decisions are made;
- The parliament shall have a real opportunity to use the information received to gain an influence on its own country's trade policy;
- The parliament shall have an opportunity to follow up on its government's decisions.

### **Recommendations on general guidelines**

The following general guidelines can be recommended on the basis of the basic principles above:

1. A country's government should ensure that the parliament has easy access to all information regarding legislation and other trade initiatives as soon as it becomes available. This rule should apply to all international trade negotiations;



2. The government should provide the original documents and prepare easily accessible, clearly worded material on draft trade agreement, legislation, etc., for the parliaments;
3. Opportunities should be provided for meetings with ministers in the parliamentary Committees well in advance of international trade meetings such as the WTO meetings but also of regional or bilateral trade negotiations. The government should give an up-to-date account of the current position and its attitude to the different proposals at such meetings;
4. The parliament should be informed by the government well in advance as regards positions in the negotiations and decisions to be made at international trade organisations. Regarding the WTO, this concerns particularly ordinary meetings of the WTO General Council, WTO Ministerial Conferences, and, if necessary, meetings of WTO Negotiating Committees or Groups. The parliaments should also subsequently be informed of any new decision;
5. Members of parliament specialising in international trade should be included, as a matter of rule, in their country's official national delegations to international trade events including WTO Ministerial Conferences.

These guidelines could be adopted by the next session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO and transmitted to all parliaments.