

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Fifteenth Session of the Steering Committee of the
Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Geneva, Switzerland
14-15 June 2007**

Report of the Canadian Delegation to the Fifteenth Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization

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

1. Background

The Parliamentary Conference on the WTO is a joint undertaking of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament. Its primary objective is to enhance the external transparency of the WTO and to make it accountable to legislators as elected representatives of the people. The sessions of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO are held once a year and on the occasion of WTO Ministerial Conferences.

The Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO is responsible for all matters relating to the organisation of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO.

2. Agenda

The Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO met on 14 and 15 June 2007 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The session included the following agenda items:

- Update on recent developments at WTO
- Assessment of the outcome of the annual 2006 session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO
- Parliamentary scrutiny of trade policies
- Composition of the Steering Committee
- Activities of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in 2007 and beyond

3. The Canadian Delegate

Forty-five participants from national parliaments representing 20 countries and regional parliamentary assemblies took part in the meeting of the Steering Committee, including Mr. Ted Menzies, M.P., (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation and the Minister of International Trade), from Canada.

4. The Meeting

To open the Meeting, Mr. Pascal Lamy briefed the Steering Committee on the current state of multilateral trade negotiations. This was followed by a discussion concerning ways to step up the parliamentary contribution to the revitalization of WTO trade talks. A detailed summary of Mr. Lamy's presentation as well as a summary of decisions taken by the Steering Committee may be found in Appendix 1.

At the close of the Meeting on 15 June, the Steering Committee adopted the following Statement:

We are encouraged by the words of the WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy at the meeting of our Steering Committee. We understand that an interim agreement paving the way for an eventual conclusion of the Doha Development Round is within reach.

Three elements are crucial for the achievement of the interim agreement: the amount of the reductions in trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, in agricultural tariffs and in industrial tariffs. These also happen to be some of the most politically sensitive subjects in our countries.

To cover the remaining ground, WTO negotiators must pool their efforts and move negotiating positions closer to each other. As members of parliament with a mandate to oversee government action in the field of international trade, we are firmly convinced that this can be done. A compromise lies on the path of mutual, balanced and fair concessions, taking into account the overall world economic landscape and the enormous risks involved in a continued stalemate.

We urge all WTO members - and in particular the United States, the European Union and the G20 developing countries - to take the necessary steps to identify the proportions of possible concessions during the coming weeks. We undertake to ensure parliamentary backing for the conclusion of a real Development Round.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator
President, Canadian Group IPU

Appendix 1

1. The Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO met on 14 and 15 June 2007 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva and was attended by 45 persons. The session was co-chaired by Mr. G. Versnick, representing the IPU, and Ms. E. Mann and Ms. E. Ferriera (for the last part of the second day), representing the European Parliament.
2. At the start of its work, the Committee paid tribute to the memory of the late Mr. Toshikatsu Matsuoka, a former member of the Steering Committee and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Japan.
3. The Committee was briefed on the current state of Doha Round negotiations by the WTO Director-General, Mr. Pascal Lamy. Answering numerous questions from the Committee members, Mr. Lamy said that contacts, discussions and negotiations had picked up over the past two months and, in his view, an interim agreement paving the way for an eventual conclusion of the Round was within reach. Three elements are crucial for the achievement of the interim agreement: the amount of the reductions in trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, in agricultural tariffs and in industrial tariffs.
4. In the Director-General's words, the negotiating positions have moved closer to each other recently and, although the landing zone is now visible, it can only be reached through trade-offs. On the matter of agricultural subsidies, an additional effort is needed from the Americans. The Europeans and Japanese should be able to follow without any major difficulty. Regarding the opening up of agricultural markets, the Europeans and the Japanese would have to improve their offer, while the emerging countries would have to accept that the protection to which they are entitled does not mean that no further opening would take place. As far as industrial tariffs are concerned, the emerging countries would have to improve the offers they have tabled. All in all, even though further concessions would have to be made by all sides, an additional political effort should be able to cover the remaining ground. The Director-General invited parliamentarians to "look over the shoulder of negotiators" and appealed to all those who believed in multilateralism to help their negotiators conclude the Round.
5. Encouraged by the words of the WTO Director-General that an agreement was feasible both politically and technically, members of the Steering Committee stressed the need to step up the parliamentary contribution to this process. In view of the largely political nature of the challenges confronted by the WTO at present, the Committee adopted a statement, the text of which may be found in Annex 2. The statement was subsequently transmitted to the press corps in Geneva and forwarded to the WTO Secretariat.
6. An in-depth discussion took place on such diverse questions as ways to jumpstart the stalled WTO negotiations, the fact that this is a Development Round, the importance of the 15th session of the Steering Committee: Summary of decisions 2. agriculture talks, the concept of environmental goods, greater coherence between aid and trade, the ethical dimension of trade accords, the need for parliaments to keep sight of rapidly proliferating bilateral and regional trade agreements, the problem of insufficiency of

information flows between the executive branch and the parliament in some countries, to name but a few.

7. The Committee reverted to the issue of parliamentary scrutiny of trade policies, already discussed at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions. The Committee had before it the text of "Draft guidelines (minimum standards) for relations between governments and parliaments on international trade issues". The draft had been prepared by the Secretariat of the European Parliament on the basis of two comparative studies, undertaken by the European Parliament and the French Senate respectively. The aim of the text was to give parliaments a code of conduct for relations between parliaments and governments and to ensure that all national parliaments can participate in and influence trade policy in an active manner. Having considered the draft, members of the Steering Committee supported the idea of giving guidance to parliaments on trade issues and agreed with the general principles of the text, it being understood that each parliament would decide on how much of the text can be implemented. Members of the Steering Committee made suggestions for modifications and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of the draft guidelines, to be circulated in advance of the Committee's next session. Once approved by the Committee, the draft guidelines could be circulated to all members of the Parliamentary Conference with a view to their adoption at the next plenary session of the Conference.

8. Referring to the subject of building up the capacity of parliaments to scrutinize government action in the domain of foreign trade, the Committee member from Niger said that a network of parliamentarians for the WTO had been created in his country by a formal decision of the National Assembly. He requested the WTO and IPU Secretariats to help organize a capacity-building seminar for the members of this network as soon as possible. The representatives of the two Secretariats undertook to look into this question.

9. The WTO Secretariat also undertook to provide the members of the Steering Committee with an overview of the current state of negotiations on all twenty-one subjects included in the Doha Development Agenda. Such an overview would be made available in advance of the next session of the Steering Committee, so as to be of practical use for the members during the session and at the WTO Public Forum.

10. Invited by the co-chairs to think "out of the box" about the future of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, members of the Committee suggested that the scope of questions addressed by the Conference could go beyond the subjects currently covered by the WTO and include, for example, trade and climate change, energy security, growth and trade. The titles of the themes of the panels should be formulated in a more "daring" and media-aware fashion, so as to attract greater attention. More thought ought to be given to ensuring gender parity in the selection of keynote speakers and to the visual impact of gender balance issues.

11. If no WTO Ministerial Conference takes place before the end of 2007, there would be little point in holding a parliamentary session. Instead, a parliamentary event should be introduced into the programme of the next WTO Public Forum (Geneva, 4-5 October

2007) and a hearing with trade representatives of leading WTO negotiating powers - including the G4 countries - be held during the next session of the Steering Committee. In the future, it would also be desirable to invite Mr. Robert Zoellick, the new President of the World Bank. The pool of speakers should be widened, with invitations extended to other prominent guest speakers, such as Nobel Prize laureate, Mr. Joseph E. Stiglitz. The Steering Committee could also 15th session of the Steering Committee: Summary of decisions 3. consider sending a delegation to the Congress of the United States and to the governments and parliaments of other major trading partners, to keep up the dialogue with parliamentary colleagues specializing in international trade.

12. It was thereafter decided that the next session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO would take place on 3 October 2007 in Geneva. Its programme would include a hearing with G4 negotiators and a dialogue with Chairpersons of some of the WTO negotiating groups. A parliamentary panel would be subsequently held within the programme of the WTO Public Forum, under the provisional theme of Trade and climate change: is trade killing our planet? The Secretariat was requested to prepare proposals for possible sending of delegations as described above.

13. The Steering Committee continued its reflection on the question of its own composition, including a mechanism for rotating Committee seats among different national parliaments. The Committee had before it a technical paper prepared by the IPU Secretariat with a description of rotation schemes practised by the United Nations, UNCTAD, IPU and the WTO. The paper also contained proposed draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Conference based on a set of guiding principles for rotation which had been considered by the Committee at its thirteenth session.

14. As regards the definition of geographical regions for the purpose of rotation of Steering Committee members from among national parliaments, the Committee concluded that it would be difficult and counterproductive to replicate the rotation schemes practised by the United Nations, UNCTAD, IPU and the WTO. The least problematic solution would be to continue with the Steering Committee's own scheme, slightly modified. It was agreed that, at its next session, the Committee would finalize such a scheme of regions. As a final task, the Committee would establish a timeframe for phasing in the regional rotation, keeping in mind the need for major trading negotiators and major economies to be always represented.

15. Having considered the proposed draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure, the Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of the draft amendments and of the scheme, taking into account the suggestions made by the Members. The Committee would revert to this question at its next session, on the condition that the agreed principles of rotation would no longer be questioned.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	Fifteenth Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization
DESTINATION	Geneva, Switzerland
DATES	June 14 – 15, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Ted Menzies, M.P.
STAFF	Jacques Maziade, Executive Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$4,378.33
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 691.35
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$ 307.90
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS	
TOTAL	\$5,377.58