

APPENDIX C

October 31, 2001
180 Wellington St.
Ottawa

NOTES FOR REMARKS BY FERGUS WATT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WORLD FEDERALISTS OF CANADA, TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ROUNDTABLE ON "GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE WTO,"

-- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

In the run-up to the Qatar Ministerial Meeting, much critical commentary has focused on the persistent efforts to sideline debate on WTO structural reform, particularly with regard to transparency and public participation.

Much of this attention has quite rightly been leveled at the arrangements for non-governmental participation at Doha (see Bridges, July - August 2001), which have the effect of diminishing NGO engagement at a time when public concern over the legitimacy of the organisation has never been greater.

Meanwhile, a similar drama is unfolding with respect to the another initiative to enhance the WTO's external transparency: finding an appropriate role for parliamentarians in the work of the organisation.

At stake here is the prospect of beginning a process with the potential to make the WTO more democratically accountable. Or not. Parliamentarians in Doha will be confronted with important questions concerning the need to play an ongoing role within a permanent political oversight body which is part of the institutional machinery of the WTO.

Questions regarding the role of parliamentarians in trade governance are not new. Indeed, growing interest by parliamentarians in the work of the WTO has been a feature of successive WTO meetings. At the last Ministerial, a group of 120 parliamentarians issued the "Seattle Declaration" which called for the creation of a permanent parliamentary standing body alongside the WTO as a necessary step in the democratisation of trade governance.

Subsequently, international meetings in April, 2001 (under the auspices of the European Parliament) and June, 2001 (under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) each brought together parliamentarians from the major regions of the world to discuss parliamentary involvement in the ongoing work of the Organisation. Although both meetings called for further discussions among parliamentarians on the occasion of the WTO Ministerial Meeting there are some noteworthy differences and competing "visions" for the role of parliamentarians in the future of the WTO.