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**GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, PARLIAMENTARIANS
AND THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

Nita Dunn and Fergus Watt
World Federalists of Canada
Wellington Building
Ottawa, Ontario
October 31, 2001

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MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

On Wednesday, October 31, 2001, a Roundtable Discussion on "Global Governance, Parliamentarians and the World Trade Organization" was held in Room 216, Wellington Building, Ottawa. Held in advance of the Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, November 9 to 13, Qatar, the meeting was sponsored by World Federalists of Canada (WFC) and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD). The meeting was chaired by Bill Graham. NOTE: Parliamentarians in Doha Qatar will meet November 11 (3 to 6 pm, Sheraton Hotel) on the basis of a joint invitation from the European Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Two presentations began the meeting, one by former Member of Parliament (MP) David Walker and another by World Federalists of Canada Executive Director Fergus Watt.

Mr. Walker reviewed his paper, "International Trade Agreements and The Role of Canadian Parliamentarians" funded this year by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (see Appendix B).

Mr. Walker's paper includes analysis of the current international context on the World Trade Organization (WTO) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); citizen participation in Seattle and Quebec City; and the "new world of international trade agreements." One of the most important issues relates to transparency and public participation. Parliamentarians can make important contributions.

Some of the pragmatic suggestions brought forward include:

- Parliamentarians can consult with government and with Canadians prior to the negotiation of trade agreements. An example is the 1999 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT) report, "Canada and the Future of the World Trade Organization: Advancing a Millennium Agenda in the Public Interest."
- Parliamentary consultations are also important once agreements are negotiated, i.e. prior to implementation into domestic law. Greater government reporting to Parliament would make the process more transparent and accountable.
- Another focus for Parliamentarians is the House and Senate committees (e.g. Agriculture and Agri-Food) that end up considering trade arrangements in the course of other business.
- Internationally, Canada should work with WTO members to improve parliamentary oversight.
- Parliamentarians have also become more involved with international trade issues through the various parliamentary associations and friendship groups that involve both Senators and Members of the House of Commons.
- As a framework for better executive/parliamentarian relations, consideration could be

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given to an Order-in-Council changing the SCFAIT mandate in a manner similar to the Finance Committee in the 1994-96 period. The Finance Committee was mandated to ensure full public hearings; it pushed NGOs and business groups to go first to Parliament instead of relying on private meetings with the Minister; it sought out small group meetings with MPs to find out personal and regional agendas; and it used the caucus committee system to air priorities and focus dissent.

Bill Graham thanked Mr. Walker, noting that it would be better if international trade and domestic politics were better integrated. The customary role for parliamentarians is after-the-fact consideration of trade treaties. With the 1999 SCFAIT exercise and recent hearings of the Standing Committee, Canada is moving to a model whereby parliamentarians are more involved in advance of important international developments. The parliamentary committees are engaged as well as the SAGITs (Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade) and DFAIT - NGO consultations.

On the question of a parliamentary oversight body, there are a growing number of these sorts of bodies. The question is, what's the appropriate model for the WTO. The OSCE parliamentary assembly offers a model. It has its own budget and secretariat. Another, looser model is the recently-created FIPA (Inter-Parliamentary Forum for the Americas) which met for the first time earlier this year in Ottawa. Meeting locations rotate with the parliament of the host state paying the bills. There are other difficult questions to resolve, such as voting in an international parliamentary forum. In the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) there is a weighted voting formula; FIPA operates on the basis of two votes per state parliament represented. Another issue is the need to define the role of national opposition parties in the international parliaments. In Canada, participation in these supranational parliaments is financed by the Joint Inter-Parliamentary Committee (JIC) whose budget is voted on the basis of all party support.

Next, World Federalists of Canada Executive Director Fergus Watt reviewed international discussions held earlier this year leading to discussion of a standing parliamentary forum at the Ministerial Meeting of the WTO (see Appendix C).

From an NGO perspective, the case for a parliamentary body at the WTO is fairly straight forward. The WTO is a powerful institution. Decisions of WTO Tribunals have binding effect on member governments. Often these decisions affect other areas of public policy, beyond the customary confines of trade rules, such as environment, safety standards, investment rules, labour standards and other rights. Where there are competing public policy objectives and imperatives, the most common form of institutional body to reconcile these competing priorities is a parliament. An elected parliament for the WTO is not a viable option. Hence the growing interest in a consultative parliamentary assembly.

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.

Boiled down, one point of view, championed by the group led by the EuroParliamentarians, would see parliamentarians participate in some sort of permanent parliamentary assembly which, although having only consultative powers, would be representative of world citizenry and would play a role as a "parallel" deliberative body in bringing public concerns to the present intergovernmental structures.

The alternative, more minimalist conception, championed by the IPU and WTO senior officials, would provide national parliamentarians with a long-distance relationship with the WTO. Rather than a permanent standing body, the IPU favors a "parliamentary dimension" animated by occasional international meetings. According to the IPU declaration this June, "Parliamentary oversight at home keeps governments accountable, and through them, the international trade agreements they negotiate. Parliamentary involvement can also help make the trading system . . . more widely understood and supported." In other words, parliamentarians can play a useful role "selling" WTO agreements to a skeptical public as long as they leave the difficult negotiations and debates to governments and their diplomats.

In Doha, parliamentarians will meet November 11, on the basis of a joint invitation from the European Parliament and the IPU (see Appendix A).

NGOs have a stake in the outcome of this debate as well. On one hand, NGOs will oppose a weak parliamentary forum, fearing that WTO officials would cite their "consultations" with elected parliamentarians as an excuse to put off extending participation rights at the WTO to civil society representatives. However, most NGOs would welcome a well-structured parliamentary assembly. A strategic alliance between progressive parliamentarians and NGOs should be pursued.

At Doha, differences of views over what constitutes the optimal model of parliamentary assembly can remain unresolved for the time being. As long as acceptable language can be included in the Qatar Declaration and/or Programme of Action, then discussions can proceed on an official, intergovernmental level to develop proposals for actual creation of a parliamentary forum, proposals which might be considered for adoption, by governments at the next Ministerial Meeting.

Pat O'Brien, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade Pierre Pettigrew presented next.

Canada supports efforts to make WTO proceedings and other international trade discussions

more transparent. Canada released publicly its negotiating text and encourages other FTAA partners to follow suit.

The Minister supports the process of encouraging greater involvement of parliamentarians. But, for the WTO, this would have to include all regions of the world. We wouldn't want a WTO process where one region dominates. To what extent is it realistic to expect participation from parliamentarians from all regions.

In his riding there is growing support for freer trade, but with a few important caveats. The process has to become more transparent.

One concrete recommendation would be to make the Sub-committee on Trade a full committee of the House of Commons, rather than a sub-committee of the SCFAIT (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade).

Comments and discussion among parliamentarians and meeting participants followed. Points raised include the following:

- the importance of getting the U.S. and EU off their agricultural subsidy war.
- an oversight strategy for parliamentarians overseeing WTO discussions could include six categories: (1) Disput resolution; (2) Terms of entry into WTO; (3) Trade issues - goods and services; (4) social and environmental issues; (5) agriculture; (6) transparency and parliamentary association. This oversight should be all-party and have an ongoing administrative back-up. The OSCE model works well.
- any effort to create a parliamentary forum should be more than a PR job for the WTO. The WTO has a PR problem and should not co-opt parliamentarians. Any parliamentary oversight body should not be just a rubber stamp. Also, a vehicle for involving parliamentarians would be a way to put pressure on governments to democratize.
- it's hard for parliamentarians to keep up with all the parliamentary associations. Do we need another one?
- NGOs could contribute to the work of a parliamentary forum for the WTO.
- the IPU may be the best vehicle for involving parliamentarians in the work of the WTO. It has the support of Mike Moore. It is already a world body of parliamentarians. It has four Commissions (political, economic, social, human rights) which are all regionally representative. These commissions all report to an IPU annual meeting. Meetings on WTO could work within this structure.
- regarding the meeting IPU has co-organized for Doha, three hours of discussion might not be enough.
- elected parliamentarians have gone door to door; they are more representative of citizens than NGOs.
- any new parliamentary body should be evaluated on the basis of the results it produces. It should have a real impact on decision-making. It should increase transparency and be complementary to the role of NGOs.
- the WTO doesn't act for the third world. Developing country participation in a

parliamentary forum is essential. Some countries cannot afford to send delegates to meetings. Which developing countries have been recruited to the concept?

- the IPU covers developing countries. One problem is that the U.S. has withdrawn from the IPU.

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The Very Reverend Lois Wilson
Ontario (Toronto) - Independent

Senator Jeremiah Grayson
Ontario (Metro Toronto) - Liberal

Senator Nicholas Taylor
Alberta (Strathmore) - Liberal

Elizabeth Hurd
Newfoundland

Senator John Spring
Manitoba (St. Vital) - Conservative

Senator Doug Roche
Alberta (Edmonton) - Independent

Fergus Watt
Executive Director, World Federalists of
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Nita Dunn
Rapporteur, World Federalists of Canada

List of Participants
Roundtable Discussion on
Global Governance, Parliamentarians and the World Trade Organization

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APPENDIX A

Strasbourg/Geneva, 19 October 2001

TO PRESIDING OFFICERS OF PARLIAMENTS OF WTO MEMBER STATES

Madam President,
Mr. President,

As you know, the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference will take place in Doha, Qatar, from 9 to 13 November 2001. We are pleased to announce that the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament, with the support of the Latin American Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, will organise a meeting of members of parliament on the occasion of the Conference.

The meeting will take place at the Conference Centre in the Sheraton Hotel, Doha, in the afternoon of Sunday, 11 November, starting at 3 p.m. The meeting is open to all members of parliament who are present in Doha as part of the official delegations accredited to the Ministerial Conference.

The meeting follows up on the meeting of parliamentarians organised at the 3rd Ministerial Conference in Seattle in December 1999, the parliamentary meeting organised by the European Parliament in April 2001 and the Parliamentary Meeting on International Trade organised by the IPU in Geneva in June 2001.

In the course of the meeting, members of parliament will have an opportunity to exchange views on the role of parliaments and their members in relation to international trade negotiations and parliamentary action to follow up on the results of the Ministerial Conference. You will find enclosed a statement on *Parliaments and international trade* which was drafted by a Working Group that met on 5 October 2001 in Geneva to prepare for the meeting of members of parliament to be held in Doha.

We very much hope that members of your parliament will be able to participate in this important event.

Yours sincerely,

President of the Council of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union

Najma Heptulla

Nicole Fontaine
President of the European Parliament



125 Sussex Dr. Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Discussion Paper

International Trade Agreements and The Role of Canadian Parliamentarians

David Walker

May 2001

The purpose of this report is to further discussions on the role of parliamentarians in the ongoing world trade debate. The first section deals with issues first raised with the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. To better understand the climate of the current debate about the WTO, the debate will be examined in the context of other trade agreements and institutions such as NAFTA. The report concludes with recommendations for an increased role in relation to these agreements and institutions. The Canadian government might respond to these expectations.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS AND
THE ROLE OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS**

David Walker

May 2001

Section I: The New World of International Trade Agreements

The World Trade Organization came into being in 1995 as a continuation and replacement for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). While some see the WTO as another step in the natural evolution of the many international institutions that have been established since the end of World War II, others view it as one of the most dramatic and important threat to national democratic institutions in the last fifty years. It will come as no surprise that it has not been easy for political leaders to reconcile these fundamentally different perspectives.

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Those who do criticize the WTO believe that there have been significant shortcomings in its consultation and decision-making processes from its inception. They view it as an artificial creation of governments rather than an institution that is 'of the people' in the UN tradition. Of the many critiques of the WTO, perhaps the best example is the one published by Canada's International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), in its report, *The World Trade Organization and Sustainable Development: An Independent Assessment*.

Although this report was published a short two years after the WTO came into operations, IISD raised some tough questions, mostly dealing with the environmental and sustainable development agenda, that in many respects are still relevant. By critics to be benchmarks in the current debate. For instance, IISD made the following suggestions on the issues of transparency and participation: The WTO has a long way to go to meet basic criteria for access to information and scope for participation. The processes of globalization must also extend the rights that traditionally come balance the risks of abuse of public authority and the unchecked exercise of private power.

The WTO must shed the habits of a club and become a global forum for trade policy. The two approaches to decision making are fundamentally incompatible.

APPENDIX B

Discussion Paper

International Trade Agreements and The Role of Canadian Parliamentarians

David Walker

May 2001

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Section I: The New World of International Trade Agreements

The World Trade Organization came into being in 1995 as a controversial replacement for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). While some see the WTO as another step in the natural evolution of the many international institutions that have been established since the end of World War II, others view it as one of the most dramatic and important threat to national democratic institutions in the last fifty years. It will come as no surprise that it has not been easy for political leaders to reconcile these fundamentally different perspectives.

Those who do criticize the WTO believe that there have been significant shortcomings in its consultation and decision-making processes from its inception. They view it as an artificial creation of governments rather than an institution that is "of the people" in the UN tradition. Of the many critiques of the WTO, perhaps the best example is the one published by Canada's International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), in its report, *The World Trade Organization and Sustainable Development: An Independent Assessment*.

Although this report was published a short two years after the WTO came into operations, IISD raised some tough questions, mostly dealing with the environmental and sustainable development agenda, that in many respects are still held out by critics to be benchmarks in the current debate: For instance, IISD made the following comment on the issues of transparency and participation: The WTO has a long way to go to meet basic criteria for access to information and scope for participation. The processes of globalization must also extend the rights that traditionally counterbalance the risks of abuse of public authority and the unfettered exercise of private power.

The WTO must shed the habits of a club and become a global forum for trade policy. The two approaches to decision making are fundamentally incompatible.

WTO deliberations were further clouded by the hostile reaction of thousands of citizens in the streets of Seattle in 1999. Interest group leaders and their supporters did not view WTO structures as being sufficiently open to public involvement or criticism. The debate about world trade regimes is, as a consequence, coloured by issues of process as much as substance. This carries a lot of weight in democratic societies where citizens expect duly-elected officials to address questions of transparency and accountability, or run the risk of political defeat.

Efforts to work within existing domestic political institutions are often lost in the intense rhetoric surrounding international meetings. Canada, for example, was successful in engaging Parliamentarians before the Seattle meeting as reflected in the extensive and thorough report of the House of Commons Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. They were also members of the official delegation. These initiatives, however, were lost in the media coverage of the streets of that city.

In the North American context, the issues of transparency is further complicated by mechanisms created under NAFTA that conduct deliberations in private and beyond public view. In a March 11, 2001 article in the New York Times, Anthony Depalma reported that while corporations are thrilled that NAFTA provides them with protection, critics are attacking the sweeping powers of its private unknown advisors.

One opponent was quoted as describing the whole process as "secret government" while a second asserted that this was no "way to do the public's business." The article ends with the observation that, since the clash between business interests and public policy will most likely continue, "the demand for a more transparent process will cause tension with the traditional concept of confidentiality."

The Quebec City process for dealing with the development of international agreements within the Americas clearly demonstrates the ongoing tension between civil society and the executive branches of the governments involved. Consequently, the move supported by Canada to open up the process through the sharing of draft agreements is a sign of internal progress and an important step toward the demarcation of a new process for dealing with outside interests. More importantly, despite this accomplishment, the question remains for Parliamentarians: How will this affect the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of various governments in the Americas? Is there a stronger role for elected representatives who are not part of the executive? The Minister for International Trade recently addressed this issue with the following thought:

"But, what had inspired me was my faith in my fellow trade ministers realizing - as I have - that we are living in a very different world than what existed pre-Seattle. We are living in the world of the Internet - where so much information is available instantaneously, at a click of a button. We are living in a world where people are more skeptical; if they cannot hold something in their own hands not only does it have no value, it is actually suspect.

"By making the negotiating texts public, we will be demystifying them in the eyes of many citizens.

By allowing them to consult the texts, we eliminate one of the loudest claims of the anti-globalization movement: the accusation that trade deals are shrouded in secrecy, concluded behind closed doors with only the interests of transnational corporations taken into account."

In other words, the stage is now set to open the process for more robust roles for others who want to be engaged in the development of regional and world wide trade agreements.

Section II: Current Roles of Canadian Parliamentarians

Canadian Parliamentarians have responded to emerging international institutions in a number of ways. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade is the focus of much of this activity. Its chairman, Bill Graham, took the Committee through an extensive review of the WTO in 1999 and reported the views of Canadians on the substance of the WTO and its processes. The Committee's report, *Canada and the Future of the World Trade Organization: Advancing a Millennium Agenda in the Public Interest*, submitted to the House of Commons in June 1999 contained forty-five recommendations for consideration by the government. In addition, three opposition parties (Reform, Bloc Quebecois, NDP) submitted minority reports on these same issues. While the themes of inclusiveness and transparency were woven through many of the recommendations, three spoke directly to this issue. The Committee stated that:

1. The Government should be "providing timely information and feedback to Parliamentarians and citizens during all pre-negotiation, negotiation, implementation and review phases of international trade and investment agreements." (Recommendation 1)
2. "Parliament's institutions, and in particular this Committee, must also be able to examine fully all future trade and investment negotiations, most importantly at the WTO level, prior to Canada implementing into domestic law any binding agreements resulting from such international trade and investment negotiations." (Recommendation 2)
3. "Canada should work with as many WTO Members as possible, in line with the reforms recommended in this Report, to seek institutional improvements for the purposes of achieving greater coordination and coherence among the activities of the WTO and those of other international organizations." (Recommendation 45)

The Government Response to the Standing Committee's report tabled in November 1999, noted that "Parliamentarians have a clear responsibility to know of, and contribute to Canada's international trade agreements" and welcomed "the role of Parliament and the input of all Parliamentarians" into these agreements. The Response also recognized that the WTO and its activities need improvement, particularly in relation to "dispute settlement, transparency and coherence."

A second focus for Parliamentarians is the House and Senate committees that end up considering trade arrangements in the course of other business. For example, because of the important impact of trade on the Canadian agricultural sector, trade-related issues are often part of the agenda of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. In March 1999, the Committee released the results of its "Take Note Hearings on the Upcoming Multilateral Trade

Negotiations on Agriculture."

The Minister of Agriculture welcomed these hearings as an important public forum for agri-food stakeholders to express their views to government on the forthcoming negotiations and the priorities to be pursued by the Government. In addition, in late 1998 and early 1999, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry held hearings on international trade in agricultural and agri-food products and the approach and priorities that Canada should adopt in the next round of WTO negotiations on agriculture. The Committee's report entitled, *The Way Ahead: Canadian Agriculture's Priorities in the Millennium Round*, was issued in August 1999.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is a third avenue for Parliamentary involvement in the international trade environment. In a meeting held on February 24, 2001, the IPU announced that it would be organizing the first parliamentary meeting on international trade, to be held in June of this year in Geneva. The planning group established the overall theme for the June meeting under the following banner: "For a free, just and equitable multilateral trading system: Providing a parliamentary dimension."

The subjects to be debated include:

- Globalization from a trade perspective: the role and action of parliament as a relay between government and the people
- WTO and the current international trading system: the role of parliaments in the field of legislation
- Parliamentary oversight with respect to future trade negotiations, particularly from the development perspective.

More importantly, the planning group indicated that they would encourage every parliament holding a membership in the IPU to nominate Members of Parliament who are directly involved in parliamentary activities dealing with international trade to attend this meeting. They were particularly interested in Parliamentarians who have had experience with interesting multi-lateral trade negotiations. The comments from IPU General Secretary, Anders B. Johnsson, are worth noting as he stated, "It will be a complement to the work of governments and will discuss the international trade issues from the particular perspective of parliaments in their constitutional role of relaying the views of people to governments, of legislating and overseeing government."

Attached to this report is the annotated provisional agenda for this meeting, which clearly indicates that Parliamentarians who are involved in this organization have now defined an agenda for clarifying the role of parliamentarians and for advocating changes within the WTO.

A fourth way in which Parliamentarians have become involved with international trade issues is through the various parliamentary associations and friendship groups that involve both Senators and Members of the House of Commons. These associations and groups operate on both multilateral and bilateral levels to promote Canadian interests abroad on an ongoing basis. Among these are the aforementioned IPU, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, the Canada-France

Inter-Parliamentary Association and the newly formed Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas. They employ conferences, seminars, symposia and other mechanisms to keep abreast of issues and international problems of concern.

These associations are significant fora for cooperation and exchanging views. It will be important, therefore, for Canadian Parliamentarians to participate fully in these organizations and through them to seek to influence other intergovernmental bodies. These associations, however, could also benefit from outreach activities including regular contact and discussions with NGOs, academics, the media and interested members of the public.

Section III: The Next Round of WTO Negotiations

The WTO secretariat is, of course, very aware of the debate emerging amongst Parliamentarians in all regions of the world. The Director General, Mike Moore, spoke directly to these issues at a European Parliament seminar in Brussels on April 10, 2001. In the first part of his speech, Mr. Moore presented a strong case for the appropriate role of the WTO in the context of the evolution of world trade organizations. He then called for greater scrutiny of international organizations, -- "a check-up, an audit for our global institutions."

Mr. Moore went on to describe ways in which the WTO could improve its method of operating by, for example, being more open and by better explaining to the various publics who closely monitor WTO activities, the arguments for and reasoning behind the current regime. More importantly, in the context of the Canadian debate about the role of Parliamentarians, Mr. Moore suggested that "Many governments could do more to inform their people about the WTO and its activities. They could develop better procedures for informing parliaments and voters about their work at the WTO, just as some European Union members have done about their work in Brussels. More might be done to involve Parliamentarians in the WTO's work. I believe Parliamentarians could, if given the opportunity, assist governments to bridge the gap between the WTO and voters by holding public hearings and better engaging the public at home in the creation and implementation of policy. I might add that Parliamentarians already play a very important part of the WTO as they are charged with the responsibility of ratifying our agreements."

Section IV: Recommendations for Improving the Role of Canadian Parliamentarians

Canadian Parliamentarians want to have a greater role in developing their country's position within world trading organizations. This applies to new agreements that may be created in the Americas as well as to NAFTA and the WTO. In the past decade, they have demonstrated their willingness to hold public hearings in the House of Commons and the Senate, to participate in multilateral and bilateral parliamentary associations and friendship groups, and provide the government with timely advice through various committee reports. It is clear from discussions and the research conducted in the course of preparing this report that Parliamentarians are not always certain that members of the executive branch of government are taking their views into account. They feel vulnerable because they believe that the NGO leadership and the business community have well-established

relationships with government that may limit or even preclude Parliamentarians from playing a more broadly based role in trade issues.

This is frustrating for them because it is generally assumed that in domestic politics Parliamentarians best represent the multiplicity of interests within their constituencies. They are, therefore, in the best position to express the public interest on various issues under national debate. The same cannot be said in relation to international trade issues, however, where Parliamentarians have clearly not been able to establish this important "relay" role. Their apparent inability to respond effectively to the demands of their constituents on trade-related issues is compounded by their lack of control over, and inability to influence, internationally driven agendas. This creates a considerable amount of frustration among Parliamentarians who see their lack of influence on international trade issues as symptomatic of their declining impact on the overall political life of the nation. Given this situation, the question then becomes one of how to deal best with these levels of frustration so that the institutions created during the past decade can continue to operate and to evolve into more transparent and accountable institutions. Here are some steps to be taken to begin addressing these issues.

Parliamentarians want to participate in the development and evolution of international institutions. This is now being recognized by organizations such as IPU and within the European Parliament. Canadian Parliamentarians in particular want to demonstrate to Canadians that they appreciate the public's desire to influence and have access to decision-making bodies that currently appear to be aloof from, and unresponsive to, Canadian interests. Consequently, there are measures that should be taken in the next year to ensure that the Parliamentary dimension is considered at both the national and international levels. At the national level, Parliamentarians could be given opportunities at the early developmental stages to influence Canada's policies in relation to issues dealt with by institutions such as the WTO, then play a greater role within these institutions.

Advise and consent are old-fashioned concepts but they are still needed to remind us that democratic societies work best when representatives have a useful role before being asked to submit to new regimes. Parliamentary committees, in particular, can be key to initiating a public dialogue on these issues and facilitating public input into the decision-making process. At the same time, there should be active Canadian engagement in organizations that suggest and promote increased opportunities for participation by Parliamentarians and contribute positively to the role now played by the executive branch.

There are tests that can be applied to ensure the successful involvement of committee members. Are trade-mandated committees given the resources to travel both nationally and internationally? There are many regional issues that can only be understood by visits to local industries and NGOs. Canadian Parliamentarians might find it useful to participate more frequently in international meetings with other elected officials. To do this properly, we should review the preparatory work to assist Parliamentarians stepping onto the world stage. Good Parliamentarians often need to be recruited and shown how they can effectively use their talent in support of Canadian government initiatives within trade negotiations. The department could undertake a planning session to support

fully the role of Parliamentarians.

As there is little national consensus about Canada's stand in world trade, Parliamentarians could be mandated to work on building such a consensus and improving the executive appreciation of where there is public support of its positions. Where there is opposition, Parliamentarians can play a legitimate role in brokering a new consensus so that Canada can pursue its objectives with greater confidence.

A more complicated issue can be found in the direct participation of Parliamentarians in international trade fora. Should Parliamentarians be moved out of their current status as participants in national delegations to that of overseers of the negotiating processes themselves? Are they to be the keepers of transparency and accountability? If so, a debate in Canada is immediately necessary. Perhaps a "take note" debate in the House of Commons would inform interested Canadians how the different members envision a more broadly based trade negotiations process.

International trade agreements have obviously put a great deal of pressure upon the political leadership of democratic regimes. In many countries, including Canada, there is an ongoing debate about increasing free trade opportunities. Public opinion polls show a sharp division in attitudes. Canadians are still reluctant participants and remain worried about their national independence. They know that the current free trade environment has been good to Canadians but they want to know as much as possible before they make future commitments. At the same time, key supporters of free trade from other nations have stated clearly in various arenas that they will resist efforts to appease national audiences by threatening the traditional trade negotiating environment that they prefer. Canadian negotiators must bring along domestic support in the context of international trading partners with different cultural, political and economic interests.

These processes point to the need to create a more strategic approach by the executive branch in dealing with Parliamentarians. Since the latter accept that a large part of their role is making sure that cabinet ministers and senior public servants hear the anxieties of constituents in policy fields such as trade, human rights, environmental protection and national security, it is incumbent to ensure that regular and productive consultations take place. The time is ripe to move beyond a passive committee environment and into a more dynamic framework.

The government has an effective model to turn to as a framework for better executive/parliamentarian relations. In the crisis atmosphere surrounding the 1994-96 budgets, the government moved beyond the normal, passive arrangements by building internal support among Parliamentarians. It changed the House of Commons Finance Committee mandate to ensure full public hearings; it pushed NGOs and business groups to go first to Parliament instead of relying on private meetings with the Minister; it sought out small group meetings with MPs to find out personal and regional agendas; and it used the caucus committee system to air priorities and focus dissent. Perhaps an intense approach could enhance trade deliberations since, in the end, these final agreements will also transform the Canadian economy.

There are, of course, several options available to achieve the objective of improving these relationships and to map out a strategy that deals with the specific circumstances within Canada. This agenda, however, is more complex than most domestic policy areas because there are so many factors, outside the control and influence of the Canadian government, that come into play. That being said, a more pro-active approach to Parliamentarians interested in these issues will generate a more cooperative environment.

Specific agenda items also improve the quality of consultations and collaborations. The greater understanding that Parliamentarians have about policy decisions facing the executive branch, the easier it is for them to understand the problems at hand, and to contribute to their solution. There are several meetings in the next twelve months involving both regional and world trade issues that could be used as *foci* to generate a successful consultation process in which Parliamentarians are able to enhance their role by participating in the development of Canadian positions. These opportunities should be defined as soon as possible and subsequent discussions undertaken in the coming weeks.

The parties can, in turn, begin to determine the specific international venues that can promote and enhance the roles of Canadian Parliamentarians working with their colleagues elsewhere while working with them so that they better appreciate the strategic planning and institutional constraints in and around the executive in their developing Canadian trade policies.

These steps require further deliberation with Parliamentarians, outside experts and departmental officials. It may be time to initiate roundtables through the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development to build a new framework useful to all parties.

At the same time, knowing that this work is being undertaken, the Ministers can further their consultations and deliberations with their Parliamentary colleagues on these very same issues.

NOTE: This brief paper does not describe in any detail the WTO and its internal structures. Readers are directed to the House of Commons Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Its report entitled "Canada and the Future of the World Trade Organization" contains a section that clearly describes the WTO and its historical development.

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.

As a result, follow-up meetings in September at the European Parliament, Strasbourg, and early October at the IPU secretariat in Geneva, were required to develop a shared framework for discussions. Parliamentarians in Doha will meet November 11, on the basis of a joint invitation from the European Parliament and the IPU (in collaboration with two regional bodies, the Latin American Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe).

These preliminary decisions have proved difficult precisely because of the differences of views on the appropriate role for parliamentarians. Boiled down, one point of view, championed by the group led by the EuroParliamentarians, would see parliamentarians participate in some sort of permanent parliamentary assembly which, although having only consultative powers, would be representative of world citizenry and would play a role as a "parallel" deliberative body in bringing public concerns to the present intergovernmental structures.

The alternative, more minimalist conception, championed by the IPU and WTO senior officials, would provide national parliamentarians with a more long-distance relationship with the WTO. Rather than a permanent standing body, the IPU favors a "parliamentary dimension" animated by occasional international meetings. According to the IPU declaration this June, "Parliamentary oversight at home keeps governments accountable, and through them, the international trade agreements they negotiate. Parliamentary involvement can also help make the trading system . . . more widely understood and supported." In other words, parliamentarians can play a useful role "selling" WTO agreements to a skeptical public as long as they leave the difficult negotiations and debates to governments and their diplomats.

NGOs have a stake in the outcome of this debate as well. Most would welcome a well-structured parliamentary assembly not only for reasons of principle, i.e. the contribution it would make toward democratising WTO affairs. More pragmatically, a parliamentary dimension to the WTO's work would provide a badly needed public forum, allowing NGOs to work with parliamentarians to air their concerns over the range of trade-related issues which have for good reason aroused concern among NGOs and broad sections of public opinion. Furthermore, just as NGOs would welcome a well-structured parliamentary assembly, they have good reason to oppose a weak parliamentary forum. They fear that WTO officials would cite their "consultations" with elected parliamentarians as an excuse to avoid extending participation rights at the WTO to civil society representatives.

The Draft Declaration circulated early in October by the WTO Chairman of the General Council and Director-General provides very few starting points to advance debate on these, and other, transparency issues. The Draft Declaration makes only passing references to the need for "a better public understanding of the WTO" and "improved dialogue with the public."

On the brighter side, there is no need for all the complexities related to parliamentary involvement to be reconciled by the end of the Qatar Ministerial. The next step in this debate need consist only in finding a formula for moving the discussions on a parliamentary dimension more formally within the intergovernmental post-Qatar agenda. As long as acceptable language can be included in the Qatar Declaration and Programme of Action, then discussions can proceed on a more official level

to develop proposals for actual creation of a parliamentary forum, proposals which might be considered for adoption by governments at the next Ministerial Meeting.

A strategic alliance between progressive parliamentarians and NGOs will be essential if any progress is to be made on the kind of permanent forum for parliamentarians which can make the WTO more transparent and accountable. Parliamentarians meeting in Doha will need to make their case strongly if they want to advance prospects for a greater role in WTO affairs.

DRAFT

Submitted: September 2001, Fergus Watt, World Federalists - Canada

Suggested NGO principles for an effective parliamentary oversight body for the WTO.

International meetings in April 2001 (under the auspices of the European Parliament) and June, 2001 (under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) brought together parliamentarians from the major regions of the world to discuss parliamentary involvement in the work of the World Trade Organisation. Both meetings called for a subsequent meeting of parliamentarians, on the occasion of the WTO Ministerial Meeting, November 2001 in Qatar.

A decision by governments to mandate establishment of a permanent parliamentary assembly, or some other form of parliamentary oversight body for the WTO, is therefore a possible outcome at the Qatar Ministerial Meeting. This document sets forth suggested principles for the consideration of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs).

NGO BENCHMARKS FOR AN EFFECTIVE WTO PA

1) SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

A parliamentary assembly would allow oversight of the WTO by elected representatives of the world's citizens and would therefore make a positive contribution to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the WTO. Civil Society Organisations should support the establishment of a parliamentary oversight body for the WTO which functions effectively and which contributes to international discourse on trade and trade-related issues.

2) WTO PA AS 'STANDING BODY'

The WTO PA should not ultimately be housed within a larger pre-existing inter-parliamentary organisation. To be effective, it must be a standing body for the WTO only.

3) WTO PA COMPLEMENTARY TO IMPROVED NGO ACCESS RIGHTS.

A parliamentary forum for the WTO would not obviate or diminish the need for other measures to increase WTO transparency and accountability, especially improvements in NGO rights and privileges at the WTO. The parliamentary assembly, and increasing NGO access, should be

complementary initiatives, pragmatic and mutually reinforcing steps to enhance democratic accountability for the WTO.

4) AUTONOMOUS PA

The WTO PA should be free to adopt a meaningful and progressive agenda. Its agenda should consider not only matters related to the work of the WTO itself, but also the range of trade-related issues which have for good reason aroused concern among NGOs, national and regional parliaments, and broad sections of public opinion. The WTO parliamentary body would be expected to considering on an ongoing basis the views of civil society organisations (through its committees, reports back to national parliaments, reports to the WTO etc.).

5) REPRESENTATION

Representation in a WTO PA should not mirror the one representative per state model which we find in the WTO itself. Representation should be based primarily on a formula which reflects the distribution of the worlds population.

(NOTE: This is the Summary Statement from a longer document which will discuss some of the other structural and procedural issues related to establishing a WTO PA. -- FW)

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complementary initiatives...
accountability for the WTO

...to advance democratic

4) AUTONOMOUS PA

The WTO PA should be free to set its own agenda and to consider issues. Its agenda should consider not only matters related to the work of the WTO, but also a range of trade-related issues which have far-reaching implications for the WTO's member national parliaments, and broad sections of public opinion. The WTO's permanent body would be expected to consider on an ongoing basis the views of civil society organisations through its committees, reports back to national parliaments, reports to the WTO...

5) REPRESENTATION

Representation in a WTO PA should not mirror the non-representative system model which we find in the WTO itself. Representation should be based primarily on a system which reflects the distribution of the world population.

(NOTE: This is the essence of the text from a longer document which will discuss in detail the structural and procedural issues related to establishing a WTO PA. - EW)