

General Council Meeting
March 4, 2021

Statement by India – Delivered by Ambassador & PR to the WTO

Agenda Item 15: APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS TO WTO BODIES

Thank you, Chair, for your Statement.

2. First of all, I wish to thank the efforts of the Troika, including yourself and the Regional Group Coordinators to finalize the appointment of the officers for the main WTO bodies. I also congratulate colleagues appointed as Chair of various bodies and wish them all success in this crucial year, when we are working on recovery from the pandemic and preparing for MC12. I also wish to acknowledge the opportunity we received to engage and consult with all concerned on this important matter. I also thank you for taking note of our suggestions which were given during consultation process. I wish to bring the following issues for consideration of the General Council.

3. Firstly, we notice that the conventional practice of rotation of Chairs to WTO bodies is not being followed diligently and our analysis reveals that a transparent system of rotation among the four groups has been lacking across the WTO bodies. In fact, some Members are not even part of any of the groups and, therefore, are not able to participate in this process constructively.

4. Secondly, while the system of rotation implies that the Chairmanship rotates sequentially among the four groups, we do not understand the basis why the rotation has been designed to be sequencing between the 3 developing countries groups vis-à-vis one developed country group alternately. With this practice, the developed countries get the opportunity to chair a WTO Body every alternate year, whereas other regional groups will have to wait for six years for their turn! By no measure such a practice is fair and balanced or it is one more form of “reverse special and differential treatment” taken up by developed Members.

5. Thirdly, despite the best efforts made by all parties, the process remains non-transparent and opaque. Often the process is left to the respective regional coordinators decide, whom we can understand may have to follow their own approach, in the absence of a harmonized practice or a basic framework. This often creates confusion among Members and we should do everything to avoid distrust in a place where trust already has a heavy prime.

6. Finally, Chair, experience shows that in Geneva most things happen here by precedence or practice. This may be working fine for those who are part of the ‘Geneva club’ for many years. But for newcomers, who have not been part of this ‘Club’ before, it is hard to understand the basis for many

practices, and some of them defy logic. I believe that time has come for us to reflect on these practices, especially the process of selection of Chairs of WTO bodies, so that the process becomes transparent. Senior delegates who have been providing leadership for many years may like to lead this process. For the sake of transparency, I hope we can start the work soon towards that end.

I thank you, Chair.
