

**General Council Meeting**  
**March 01-02, 2021**

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

***Agenda Item 2: 'Implementation of the Bali, Nairobi and Buenos Aires Outcomes – Statement by the Chairman'***

**Welcome to new DG, WTO**

Thank you Chair, Good Morning colleagues. On behalf of India, first I extend warm welcome and convey my sincere congratulations to Dr. Ngozi on her appointment as the Director General of the World Trade Organization. I assure you of full cooperation on behalf of India in promoting constructive engagement amongst the membership in taking forward the work of the WTO.

2. Let me convey my best wishes and bid farewell to all the Ambassadors who are leaving Geneva, and welcome to new Ambassadors.

**General intervention on PSH**

3. Chair, as we get ourselves ready for MC 12, we would like to reiterate the Ministerial mandates from Bali and Nairobi regarding an effective, permanent outcome on Public Stock Holding for food security purposes. This outcome is also imperative for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals number 1 and 2, and for telling the world that the WTO can deliver results especially in areas of immediate concern to the large majority of its Membership.

4. The pandemic has heightened the challenges of food and livelihood security, as seen from the rise in FAO food price index, which hit a three year high during 2020. Rising food inflation further aggravates the hardship of those already under significant duress due to COVID-19.

5. The pandemic also portrayed how a sustainable PSH works to mitigate the disasters' effects and reduce the hardships of the vulnerable. In this context, I invite the members to look at India's mammoth effort in reaching food to its poor and vulnerable population during the pandemic. In 2020, food support in the form of 05 Kg Rice or Wheat and 01 Kg of Pulses per month were supplied to 800 million people, for eight months. This was possible because of a robust PSH programme.

6. Further, in the absence of a robust PSH Programme in India and other countries, imagine the kind of demand that would have created in the global food market and what would have happened to the already long time highest food price index. The exporting countries would have also come under immense pressure and would be forced resort to extreme measures.

7. As a responsible Member of the WTO, India has been consistently complying with its notification obligations at the WTO, including with the notification obligations prescribed in the document G/AG/2. Our track-record with meeting our transparency obligations has been much better than that of several Members who are pressing for enhanced transparency at the WTO.

8. Pursuant to the Bali Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes and the General Council Decision of 2014 as contained in document WT/L/939, India notified the Committee on Agriculture that it has, for the first time, exceeded the de minimis level of market price support for rice for the marketing year 2018-2019, by a very minor margin of 1.4%.

9. Market price support for rice, a traditional staple food crop is notified under Article 7.2(b) of the Agreement on Agriculture in pursuance of public stockholding programmes for food security purposes. India's public stockholding programmes for food security purposes, covering rice and a number of other commodities, have been consistently reported in its Table DS: 1 notifications since 1995.

10. The programme is consistent with the criteria mentioned in paragraph 3, footnote 5, and footnote 5&6 of Annex 2 to the Agreement on Agriculture. Further, the stocks under the programme are acquired and released in order to meet the domestic food security needs of India's poor and vulnerable population, and not to impede commercial trade or food security of others. For these reasons, the notified level of market price support for rice is covered by the peace clause set out in the Bali Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes (WT/MIN (13)/38) and the General Council Decision (WT/L/939).

11. India has been constructively engaging on this issue with other Members in the meetings of the Committee on Agriculture. An outcome for PSH should be an improvement over the present peace clause with extension to new programmes and new products and also to those Members who were not having PSH programme in 2013. The Ministerial mandate on PSH underlines that negotiations under this pillar have to be on an accelerated, separate track. Hence, we do not support linking PSH outcomes with outcomes in other pillars. We also emphasize that work on the PSH file continues in a dedicated session to pursue the Ministerial mandate.

12. It is natural to expect that the track record of the main votaries of enhanced transparency such as EU would be nothing short of exemplary in complying with their existing notification obligations. But we find that the EU has still not submitted its DS:1 notification for the marketing year 2018-19, well past the deadline of 30 September 2019 by when they should have notified this information according to the deadlines mandated in document G/AG/2. A delay of more than a year! The EU was also late by a period of almost 19 months in notifying their DS:1 notification for the marketing year 2017-18. It is also disappointing to note that specific trade concerns concerning the EU's policy related to MRLs and endocrine disruptors have remained on the agenda of the SPS Committee for several years together.

13. Chair, it is not our intention to point fingers at any member, but our expectation is that Members practice what they preach. Another glaring example of this pretence was the implementation of export restriction on vaccines by EU, in the name of transparency! This measure, as Members know, is anything but transparent. We would encourage the EU and other members to lead by example and ensure that they fulfil their existing transparency obligations before proposing to add an ever-growing list of new obligations.

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