

**General Council Meeting
July 22-23, 2020**

**

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

Agenda Item 9: ‘Procedural guidelines for WTO councils and committees addressing trade concerns – Statement by Co-Sponsors of WT/GC/W/777/Rev.5’

Thank you, Chair.

2. India thanks the European Union and other proponents for the draft General Council Decision on “Procedural guidelines for WTO councils and committees addressing trade concerns as contained in the document WT/GC/W/777/Rev.5.”

3. We support the need for a mechanism to address specific trade concerns effectively and in that regard, the proposal to improve the meeting procedures of the WTO bodies. Proposals such as indicative yearly schedules of meetings for each of the WTO bodies; timely circulation of the agenda and the minutes of the meetings; and strengthening of the existing processes are welcome.

4. The proposal is still being examined in our capital. In the March 2020 GC, we had expressed our preliminary concerns over certain issues including:

First, given the fact that WTO is a Member driven organisation and neutrality is the core principle embedded in it, we should be cautious about any enhanced direct role of the Chair of any of the WTO bodies as well as that of the Secretariat in resolving trade concerns between the Members.

Second, the opportunity to bring up a trade concern in every Committee may prompt Members to raise their concerns frequently across all relevant WTO bodies, thereby crowding the agenda of each Committee and put strain on the precious time of such bodies and the resources of smaller delegations.

Third, the requirement of submitting written responses within the strict timeline of 20 days could be burdensome on resource-constrained Members and those with multiple layers of federal structures.

Fourth, it is not clear as to whether the oral report of the Chair will involve any interpretation, particularly on highly technical issues, which may be beyond the capacity of the respective Chair.

5. We were hoping to discuss the proposal with its co-sponsors, but the same could not happen due to the outbreak of the pandemic. We hope we could do that now.

6. I thank you, Chair.
