

**General Council Meeting
23 – 24 February, 2022**

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

**Agenda Item 2: REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE AND REPORT
BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

Let me begin by expressing thanks to the DG for her report and also to Ambassador Santiago and Ambassador Gloria for their reports. Congratulations to DG on completing first anniversary. Thanks for taking up the issues of developing countries from time to time and always mentioning the preamble of Marrakesh Agreement that it is about ‘people’, not only from development world but also people from developing countries.

Response to Pandemic:

2. Chair, there has been intensive engagement under this process including under your stewardship. We must focus on a balanced response. We must refrain from approaching this as a market access issue and take away policy space available for Members and impose cumbersome obligations that serve to benefit a few Members. No doubt, we need to work on supply chain bottlenecks. However, doing away with the legitimate policy instrument of **export restrictions** or aiming for making temporary **elimination of tariffs** a permanent measure or calling for stringent transparency obligations is not a panacea to our problems.

TRIPS Waiver:

3. Chair, we would like to have a quick movement on the **TRIPS Waiver proposal**. The co-sponsors have tirelessly engaged with everyone; and we have shown flexibility and pragmatism.

4. Waiver remains a key ingredient of a multi-pronged approach to combat the pandemic. While some members have called for maintaining the momentum in negotiations on all relevant areas, it is pertinent to bear in mind that an outcome aimed at saving lives, livelihoods and to assist in global recovery from the pandemic, especially for the developing and the least developed members should guide the approach in these extraordinary times. A comprehensive, effective, multilateral solution on the waiver, therefore, must be prioritized over all other areas wherein negotiations are underway as this alone can salvage the waning credibility of this prominent multilateral institution.

5. We thank the DG for her efforts in moving forward these discussions. The outcomes on this will test the credibility of multilateral trading system and need not wait for MC12.

Agriculture:

6. Chair, pandemic's adverse impact on food security of poor and vulnerable population is beyond explanation and their food security is a critical and mandated issue for this organization. A simple, efficient, and permanent solution on extending **PSH for food security purposes** to new programs and new products is therefore a key deliverable. It has been indicated by proponents that we will intensify our bilateral consultations as Chair's text is not a starting point for us. Any outcome that does not address this mandated issue will not enhance WTO's credibility.

Fisheries Subsidies:

7. The sustainability of the oceans' marine resources is at the core of the disciplines being negotiated and it's a shared responsibility of all. Keeping in line with this understating, India tabled its proposal (RD/TN/RL/147) suggesting prohibition of the subsidies provided by the distant water fishing nations, as this type of fishing is most harmful and cannot be continued without huge subsidies either for construction of large industrial vessels or allowing these vessels with subsidized fuel to exploit the high seas and waters of other countries. We believe this prohibition will be the real step towards sustainability in line with the principle of "Polluter Pays" and "Common but differentiated responsibility". The prohibition of subsidies for distant water fishing is a red line for us.

8. Chair, let me reiterate that effective and appropriate S&DT is an integral part of these negotiations. This must ensure the developmental and future policy space needs of developing countries and LDCs to develop their fisheries sector and to provide equitable opportunities to harness fisheries resources in all geographic zones, including in high seas. India's comprehensive proposal (RD/TN/RL/147) on Article 5 is keeping in view the demands of developing countries and LDCs on S&DT in this regard. Further, there is a need for S&DT in the form of carve-outs for subsistence, artisanal and small-scale fishermen up to coastal Members EEZ (200 nautical miles). Chair, let me assure you that India will support conclusion of these negotiations if the subsidies for distant water fishing are prohibited in real sense and demands of developing countries and LDCs on S&DT for future policy space to diversify and develop the fishing sector sustainably, including in the high seas, along with effective and appropriate S&DT for the subsistence, artisanal and small-scale fishermen are accepted.

WTO Reform:

9. Chair, India supports the WTO reform agenda and has together with the African Union and Cuba has re-submitted its WTO reform paper (WT/GC/W/778/Rev.4) for discussion at this GC meeting. India is ready to support decision by the Ministers to initiate that reform process. However, that process needs to be inclusive, transparent and stick to basic principles, which need to be spelt out before the Ministers agree to initiate the process. The elements that we wish to see incorporated in the process are contained in our proposal (JOB/GC/287) as a draft Ministerial decision. We look forward to Members' engagement on our proposals.

Thank You Chair.
