

**General Council Meeting
(27th -28th July 2021)**

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

Agenda Item 17: Strengthening the multilateral character of the World Trade Organization – request from the African Group

Thank you Chair for giving me the floor again.

2. At the outset India would like to thank the African Group for bringing this important item on the agenda of this Council. It is heartening to see 3 agendas relating to centrality of Multilateral System, have been brought forward in today's deliberations, Agenda 14, 16 and this one. We share the core objectives stated by Mauritius on behalf of African Group, namely, preservation of the multilateral character of the WTO, core principles of the Marrakesh Agreement, including S&DT, need for policy space for developing and LDC members to reap the full benefits of trade, the need for negotiated outcomes of the WTO to be fair and balanced, the need for WTO Members to share common and differentiated responsibilities, immediate restoration of the two-tier dispute settlement system and the development objective underpinning the multilateral trading system.

3. Chair, as mentioned by in our intervention under Agenda Item 14, recognizing the problems created by the fragmented system of trade rules, WTO members sought an end to this problem. This has been clearly articulated in the following recitals of the Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement – *“Resolved, therefore, to develop an integrated, more viable and durable multilateral trading system”* and *“Determined to preserve the basic principles and to further the objectives underlying this multilateral trading system.”*

4. Going back to plurilateral agreements would, therefore, be a step in the wrong direction and would be contrary to the determination and resolve, as enshrined in the Preamble of the Marrakesh Agreement.

5. My delegation, therefore, supports the call by the African Union and many other Members to strengthen the multilateral character of the World Trade Organization, in all its activities, starting from agenda setting, negotiations and finalization and adoption of new rules, to achieve inclusive development-oriented balanced outcomes, in line with the principles enshrined in the preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement, including *‘raising standards of living and ensuring full employment’* and *‘need for positive efforts designed to ensure that developing countries, and especially the least developed among them, secure a share in the*

growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development'.

I thank you Chair.