

CBFA Meeting on 22 October 2020

Agenda B: 2019 Annual Report on Diversity in the WTO Secretariat

Statement of India

Thank you Chair.

2. We thank the secretariat for the Annual Report on Diversity in the WTO Secretariat, in line with the mandate on measures proposed by Brazil, China, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Pakistan and South Africa in their joint statement (WT/BFA/W/198) in April 2010.

3. While acknowledging the essential objective to have the highest possible standards of competence as the primary basis for recruitments, we believe that diversification should remain a long-term objective of the recruitment policy of the WTO and the two are not mutually conflicting.

4. Chair, while we appreciate the efforts being made towards achieving diversity at the Secretariat, we also believe there is room for improvement. Staffing pattern still remains skewed in favor of a handful of members. Let me give some examples:

a) Just 5 countries - constituting only 3% of the membership - account for nearly 50% of the total staff strength. The share of these countries in 1995, i.e., about 25 years ago, was 54%. So, not much has changed, in terms of staff spread across the membership. Not surprisingly, these are all developed country members!

b) Secondly, the staff representation of many members, including India has remained stagnant in the past 25 years. For instance, India's share in the total WTO Staff in 1995 was 2.2% and now it is 2.1%. Almost no change! In the professional staff category, it has in fact gone down from 4.1% in 1995 to 3.5% in 2019. Even smaller countries, with significantly smaller populations have more staff in the Secretariat than India, world's second most populous country, whose professionals have made a mark across the world with their skills and talent. It is not that there is not enough interest among Indians or other developing country candidates to work at the Secretariat. In fact, in 2019, highest number of applicants, across staff categories, were from India.

c) Thirdly, developing countries and LDCs that account for more than 3/4th of the WTO membership account for only 30% of the staff. Whereas, the developed countries, constituting less than 1/4th of the membership account for 70% of the staff. It is clearly evident that select Developed Countries continue to enjoy some kind of Special and Differential Treatment in recruitment at the WTO, but often the narrative is to accuse and defame the developing countries for their legitimate S&DT entitlements in WTO agreements.

6. Therefore, we call up on more measures and active efforts to increase the diversity of the Secretariat. We will work with the secretariat to achieve the diversity that the WTO truly deserves.

8. Having said that, I wish to compliment the WTO secretariat for achieving an impressive gender balance in staffing, with 54.7% of the staff being women in 2019, compared to their share of 31% in 1995. We are happy to note that this balance has been achieved across staff categories and levels. With the appointment of the first woman Director General this year, history will be made and a new glass-ceiling would be broken. I complement the entire WTO Membership for this accomplishment.

7. I thank you Chair.