

## General Council Meeting

March 3, 2020

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### Statement by India - Delivered by Ambassador & PR to the WTO

#### **Procedural Guidelines for WTO Councils and Committees Addressing Trade Concerns.**

India thanks the European Union and other proponents for the modified version of its 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.

2. We support the need for the mechanism to address specific trade concerns effectively. Therefore, we support the idea of improving the meeting procedures of the WTO bodies, with indicative yearly schedules of meetings for each of the WTO bodies for effective participation of Members, particularly those having limited resources. Timely circulation of the agenda and the minutes of the meetings and strengthening of the existing processes to address constructively the specific trade concerns are also welcome.

3. Though the joint proposal is being examined in our capital, it appears to be an improvement over the earlier versions. However, it still contains certain unclarified issues on which we wish to make some preliminary comments:

*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 Chair.

4. Having raised these issues, we are keen to further discuss the proposal and work to improve the functioning of the WTO bodies.

5. I thank you, Chair

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