

General Council Meeting

July 22-23, 2020

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

Agenda Item 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALI, NAIROBI AND BUENOS AIRES OUTCOMES – STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR

Thank you, Chair, for your Statement.

E-Commerce

2. I take this opportunity to thank you and the Chairs of the bodies mandated under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce for their respective reports.

3. I also want to thank you, Chair, the Secretariat and the Members for their engagement during the Webinar on the Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions held on 13 July, 2020 and for the open-ended informal meeting of GC on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce held on 14 July, 2020. Such engagements by the Membership are critical building blocks towards the reinvigoration of the work under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce and for achieving clarity on scope, definition and impact of the moratorium, as mandated by the General Council in December 2019.

4. Chair, as emphasized by many others, it is important for the Membership to come to a common understanding on the scope of the moratorium. Without clarity on the scope of the moratorium, there can be no predictability for business, trade and industry. More importantly, governments would not know what their obligations and rights are. Only a clear understanding on the scope and an appreciation of its impact would help the Ministers take a well-considered and wise decision on the Moratorium at MC12.

5. As far as our understanding on the scope and impact of the Moratorium is concerned, the same is reflected in our joint proposal with South Africa, namely, 'The E-Commerce Moratorium: Scope and its Impact' (contained in document WT/GC/W/798).

6. While we look forward to more intensive discussions on the various aspects of the moratorium in various settings, we would like to strongly emphasize that in the light of the Buenos Aires and the December 2019 GC Decisions on the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, it will be useful and productive for the membership to continue with the periodic reviews of the Work Programme by the General Council in its sessions of July and December until the next Ministerial.

Let me now move towards the issue of **Public Stockholding**

7. India takes this opportunity to request the Members to constructively engage in the negotiations in the issue of Public stockholding for food security purposes, as committed in the Ministerial Conferences in Bali and Nairobi.

8. A permanent solution in this issue, which is simple and can be used by developing countries would go a long way in addressing their genuine concerns relating to food security of the most vulnerable section of the society.

9. The current pandemic has shown, how adversely the poor in the developing countries are impacted. Developing governments have been struggling with the issues faced by the most vulnerable sections of the society, including agricultural farmers and labourers.

10. In these circumstances, it becomes all the more important for the developing countries to have adequate flexibility in this area. We would appreciate for constructive approach by members to comply with the mandates of the Ministers in this area.

11. As a responsible Member of the WTO, India has been consistently complying with its notification obligations at the WTO, including with the notification obligations prescribed in the document G/AG/2. Our track-record with meeting our transparency obligations has been much better than that of several Members who are pressing for enhanced transparency at the WTO.

12. Pursuant to the Bali Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes and the General Council Decision of 2014 as contained in document WT/L/939, India notified the Committee on Agriculture that it has, for the first time, exceeded the de minimis level of market price support for rice for the marketing year 2018-2019, by a very minor margin of 1.4%.

13. Market price support for rice, a traditional staple food crop is notified under Article 7.2(b) of the Agreement on Agriculture in pursuance of public stockholding programmes for food security purposes. India's public stockholding programmes for food security purposes, covering rice and a number of other commodities, have been consistently reported in its Table DS: 1 notifications since 1995.

14. The programme is consistent with the criteria mentioned in paragraph 3, footnote 5, and footnote 5&6 of Annex 2 to the Agreement on Agriculture. Further, the stocks under the programme are acquired and released in order to meet the domestic food security needs of India's poor and vulnerable population, and not to impede commercial trade or food security of others. For these reasons, the notified level of market price support for rice is covered by the peace clause set out in the Bali Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes (WT/MIN (13)/38) and the General Council Decision (WT/L/939).

15. India stands ready to engage on this issue with other Members, and will answer specific questions that Members may have on this subject, in the Committee of Agriculture meeting on 28 July 2020.

I thank you, Chair.
