

New Delhi, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019

## WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONCLUDES IN NEW DELHI TODAY



*Heads of delegations of participating countries at the New Delhi WTO Ministerial Meeting pose for a group photo*

The WTO Ministerial Meeting of Developing Countries concluded in New Delhi today. The Ministerial Meeting began last evening with a dinner hosted by the Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu. The Director General of WTO, Roberto Azevedo, was also present during the dinner.

In his address at the dinner, Suresh Prabhu, said that the New Delhi Meeting is taking place at a time when trade tensions show no signs of abating and protectionist tendencies are on the rise which makes it very essential to collectively debate and discuss the way forward in a multilateral framework.

Commerce Minister added that the New Delhi Ministerial Meeting is an initiative by India to facilitate a free and frank exchange of views on all issues of common interest, particularly of the Developing Countries and will explore how to collectively address the challenges emerging from suggestions on WTO reform.

In his address at the dinner last night, DG, WTO, Roberto Azevedo, said that the reform process will mitigate the current crisis at WTO and talk about destroying the existing system is not the correct way and may not have the desired outcome. DG, WTO suggested for working in the existing system.

He further said that the Dispute Settlement crisis is a deep crisis and all countries have to look for a resolution. Business as usual approach is not an option anymore and all members should work for a solution.

Roberto Azevedo said that plurilaterals should not be seen as a division between Developed and Developing Countries as they contain members from both sides. He further said that the Special and Differential Treatment Mechanism must be innovative in order to address the impasse. If left unaddressed it may go either way, he said. The ideal way is to have a benchmark because the differentiation is already happening and is essential for small Developing Countries. DG, WTO further added that the best way forward is to have a trade-facilitation-agreement-type model where countries may set their own benchmarks.

In the inaugural session of the Ministerial Meeting, today morning, Suresh Prabhu said that there are 7.3 billion people living in Developing Countries and they cannot and should not be deprived of the benefits of growth and WTO is an institution which addresses these concerns of development and growth of countries through trade and not aid. The Commerce Minister added that he is certain that the efforts of the New Delhi Ministerial Meeting will definitely lead to a WTO which is better than what it is today.

The Multilateral Trading System is the collective responsibility of all countries who have a stake in it. It is the duty of countries to successfully address conflicting interests, motives and ideologies, in order to preserve and strengthen this valuable institution, the Minister added. The principles of non-discrimination, predictability, transparency, the tradition of decision-making by consensus and, most importantly, the commitment to development, underlying the multilateral trading system, are too valuable to lose, he said.

The approach of the New Delhi Ministerial Meeting is to re-energise and strengthen multilateralism and put in place a more inclusive decision - making process. Towards this end, it is essential that the collective view of as many Developing Countries as possible is formally articulated in submissions on WTO reforms.

A year ago, on 19-20 March 2018, India had organised an Informal WTO Ministerial Gathering, in which more than 50 Members – both developed and developing- had participated. In the March 2018 Gathering in New Delhi it was emphasized that there is a need to preserve and enhance the functioning and credibility of the rules-based Multilateral Trading System as embodied in the WTO.

Commerce Minister hoped that the New Delhi Ministerial Meeting will re-endorse the centrality of development in WTO negotiations and provide suggestions for WTO reforms with development at its core.

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