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(17-6884)

Page: 1/2

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UNION MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

INDIA

Madam Chairperson, Ministers, Director General, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen I thank Minister Susana Malcorra, the government and the people of Argentina for their warm hospitality and for organising this conference.

The expansion of global trade is our vision in the WTO. All countries stand to benefit from it. Therefore, at MC11 we urge the entire WTO Membership to unequivocally reaffirm the importance of a rules-based multilateral trading system as enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement.

The outcome of the expansion of global trade must be development. India calls upon the WTO membership to re-endorse the centrality of development in WTO negotiations without creating new sub-categories of countries.

At MC11 we look forward to constructive engagement of the entire WTO membership for taking final decisions in areas where specific mandates were provided at Nairobi.

One such issue is the permanent solution for public stockholding for food security purposes. This is a matter of survival for eight hundred million hungry and undernourished people in the world. A successful resolution of this issue would fulfil our collective commitment to the global community. In this context, we cannot envisage any negotiated outcome at MC 11, which does not include a permanent solution.

Turning to Agricultural Domestic Support, the Agreement on Agriculture provides considerable flexibility to the developed members to provide huge subsidies and further, to concentrate these subsidies on a few products. This asymmetry needs to be addressed as a first step in agricultural reform through a post-MC11 work programme without, however, shifting the burden of reduction of agricultural subsidies to developing countries.

India recognizes that some progress has been made in the area of fisheries subsidies. We can agree to future work on this issue towards an outcome at MC12 that preserves the policy space for developing countries to support millions who depend on traditional fishing activity as the sole source of livelihood.

On Services, India has engaged constructively with the proponents of the domestic regulation disciplines. However, I am apprehensive that the present approach in the negotiations will not lead to any fruitful outcomes at MC11. A work programme for Services including DR and some elements of India's proposal on Trade Facilitation in Services, including Mode 4, can take the Services agenda forward.

Turning to some of the new issues that are sought to be introduced into the negotiating agenda of the WTO, in India's view agreeing to these would be extremely divisive. Many of these issues are neither trade-related nor have these been discussed in detail. For instance, on E-commerce, India's view is that gains from E-commerce must not be confused with gains from negotiating binding rules in this area. It is for this reason that we support continuation of the 1998 Work Programme with its non-negotiating mandate.

In this context, shifting the priority from DDA issues to non-trade issues like Investment Facilitation and MSMEs, for which there is no mandate, is difficult to accept.

Let me take this opportunity to express India's concern at the inordinate delay in appointment of new members to the Appellate Body. We need to collectively and expeditiously resolve this impasse.

We are increasingly seeing that the discourse on development at the WTO is sought to be deflected by specious arguments based on aggregate GDP figures. While in India we are proud of our GDP and growth rates of recent years, propelled by innovative economic policies of my government, we cannot ignore that India is home to more than 600 million poor people. Therefore, we are legitimate demandeurs for special and differential treatment for developing countries. It is also noteworthy that many developed countries of today have benefitted from long periods of derogation from GATT rules in the area of agriculture and textiles.

In conclusion, let me say that at a time when the global trade environment is extremely fragile, let this Ministerial Conference be an occasion for concluding the unfinished agenda of the Doha Work Programme, and collectively strive to preserve and revitalize the WTO.
