



Visit of the Commerce and Industry Minister to Geneva for discussions on WTO related issues

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The Commerce and Industry Minister, Smt Nirmala Sitharaman, visited Geneva on 18-19 July 2017 to, *inter-alia*, hold consultations with representatives of key WTO member countries, Director General WTO and Secretary General, UNCTAD.

During her meeting with the Director General, WTO, Commerce & Industry Minister mentioned the kind of outcomes India would like to see at the upcoming Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the WTO ('MC11'). She particularly stressed that the MC11 outcomes must include a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes (PSH) on which there is a Ministerial mandate. She urged DG, WTO to follow up vigorously to support the efforts to reach finality on PSH and the agricultural Special Safeguard Mechanism. She stressed that any attempts at seeking outcomes on new issues such as e-commerce and investment facilitation should not be at the cost of other long pending issues on the agenda of the Doha Round.

Commerce & Industry Minister addressed the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies on the subject of "Reclaiming Multilateralism". An audience comprising over 350 diplomats, representatives from various inter-governmental organizations, lawyers, academicians, students and media, attended the event.

Commerce & Industry Minister highlighted that as one of the founding members of the WTO, India has a long history as a staunch supporter of multilateralism. She focused on how recent changes in position of some countries have affected multilateralism in general and the multilateral trading system in particular. She made suggestions to reinvigorate the spirit of multilateralism, specifically for strengthening systems, countering protectionism and fostering development. Emphasizing India's openness to trade, she pointed out that India's approach to negotiations is based on a deep and unflinching commitment to address development issues in the trade negotiations. She urged WTO members to rise to the occasion and take collective responsibility to reclaim multilateralism, which is the only means to address global challenges in trade.

Commerce & Industry Minister Address was extremely well received and was followed by a lively interaction with the audience. In CIM's subsequent interactions with representatives of several WTO member countries, they expressed deep appreciation and agreement with many of the views articulated by her.

Commerce & Industry Minister also visited the South Centre, which is an intergovernmental organization of developing countries that helps developing countries to combine their efforts and expertise to promote their common interests in the international arena. She urged the South Centre to continue its important role in coalition building for negotiations among developing countries so that they are not denied their due at the WTO. Participants at the interaction included Ambassadors of prominent developing member countries. There was a useful exchange of views on their perspectives on MC11 outcomes and the process leading up to it.

The Minister also had a meeting with selected Ambassadors and Chairs of various WTO Negotiating Group to ascertain their views, *inter-alia*, on future of the WTO negotiations and likely outcomes from MC11. The participants shared their views and insights on various aspects of the WTO negotiations. Common positions and stands were identified during the interaction.

During her visit to Geneva she also interacted with the Secretary General of UNCTAD and Executive Director of International Trade Centre. During these meetings she appreciated the ongoing activities of these institutions with and on behalf of India and suggested further enhanced engagements.

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