



Concept Note on Trade Facilitation Agreement

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India tabled the "Concept Note for an initiative on Trade Facilitation in Services" dated 27 September 2016(S/WPDR/W/55) at the WTO. The objective behind India's proposal for an Agreement on Trade Facilitation in Services (TFS) is to initiate discussions at the WTO on how to comprehensively address the numerous border and behind-the-border barriers, across all modes of supply, which are impediments to the realization of the full potential of services trade. Like the Trade Facilitation Agreement ("TFA"), adopted by WTO Members in 2014 to facilitate trade in goods, a well-structured TFS will significantly enhance the potential for trade in services for all WTO Members. India has proposed that the TFS Agreement could be based on the TFA in goods, with suitable modification and adaptation to the services context, as required.

India's proposal was initially discussed at the WTO on 6th October 2016. Many WTO Members expressed interest in India's proposal as a positive move to revive Services negotiations at the WTO. Some of the key issues raised by members related to scope and coverage of India's proposal, mandate for a TFS and provisions related to Special and Differential Treatment. Some members sought greater detail about India's proposal.

The response of the Government was that India's proposal for an Agreement on TFS is to comprehensively address the numerous border and behind-the-border barriers impeding trade in services across all modes of supply. India has taken the position that the mandate for a TFS arises from the various provisions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Subsequently, India tabled a follow-up proposal dated 14th November 2016 on "Possible Elements of a Trade Facilitation in Services Agreement" (S/WPDR/W/57) at the WTO, which outlines the possible elements of the TFS Agreement, as conceived by India, in a more detailed manner.

Recently, India has tabled a draft legal text on Trade Facilitation in Services at the WTO to facilitate discussions among WTO members and to take forward this agenda.

This information was given by the Commerce and Industry Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

MJPS

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