Beijing asks WTO members to unite

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China called for World Trade Organization members to oppose the US Section 301 trade sanction investigations, saying the unilateral action is detrimental to all parties.  
The recent US move will not only impair the rights and interests of China and other WTO members, but it also seriously undermines the multilateral trading system, Chinese WTO Ambassador Zhang Xiangchen said at a recent WTO meeting in Geneva.  
The comments came amid growing concern over the escalating trade tensions between the world’s two largest economies.  
Section 301 investigations are purely unilateral and “violate the most fundamental values and principles” of the WTO, Zhang said at the meeting of the WTO’s Council on Trade in Goods.  
“The US is setting a very bad precedent by bluntly breaching its commitment made to the world,” Zhang warned.  
He further urged WTO members to unite to prevent the resurrection of 301 investigations and “lock this beast back into the cage” of the WTO rules.  
“Unilateralism is fundamentally incompatible with the WTO, like fire and water. In the open sea, if the boat capsizes, no one is safe from drowning,” Zhang said. “The WTO is under siege, and all of us should lock arms to defend it.”  
Since US President Donald Trump signed a memorandum on Thursday that could lead to the imposition of stiff tariffs on China, the international community has paid close attention to the issue for fear of the negative impact caused by protectionism.  
The European Commission launched an investigation on Monday into imports of steel products into the European Union in response to the recent US aluminum and steel tariff plan.  
The commission said in a statement that imports of certain steel products are expected to grow faster as steel manufacturers are subjected to the US tariffs divert their product to Europe.  
The study, which may last up to nine months, could lead the EU to impose its own quotas or tariffs on steel to prevent harm to its own industry.  
China’s Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday that while EU’s response to the US tariff measures is understandable, adopting trade protection measures is not the right choice.  
Wang Hejun, head of the ministry’s trade remedy and investigation bureau, said the EU action will further “worsen the chaotic international trade” caused by the US, which might lead to more serious damage to the normal trade order.  
China is willing to strengthen communications with the EU to cope with the chaos generated by the US aluminum and steel tariffs, Wang said.  
US agricultural conglomerate Cargill Inc expressed deep concern in a statement due to the increasing trade tensions between the US and China.  
The world is interdependent, and the cost of trade wars is too high, the company said. “The impact of trade conflict between the world’s two largest economies could lead to a destructive trade war with serious consequences for economic growth and job creation.”

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