US trade war hurts global economy, says Chinese official

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The United States is launching a trade war not only with China, but with the whole world, dragging the world economy into a treacherous zone, the economic and commercial counselor at the Chinese embassy in Kenya said on Friday.  
Guo Ce, who spoke during a news conference on Friday, said the measures taken by the US will seriously worsen the global economic and trade environment, combat the global trade order, shake the confidence of everybody in the world economy, and endanger the global industrial system and value chain. This is in addition to harming the interests of many multinational corporations and ordinary consumers.  
"Though a trade war is the last thing we want, we are in no way afraid of fighting one. China will take resolute and forceful measures in a timely manner to safeguard its own legitimate and legal rights and interests as well as uphold the multilateral trading system and rules," he said.  
Guo said the US is in flagrant violation of World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, applying restrictive trade measures under section 232 and imposing tariffs on $50 billion in goods from China under section 301 of US domestic law.  
Subsequently, the US once again threatened to impose tariffs on more than $500 billion in goods, or roughly the total amount that the US imported from China. The US also issued similar threats to trade partners from other countries and regions.  
"Such typical acts of unilateralism and trade protectionism, if left untreated, will fatally undermine the functioning of international free trade," Guo said.  
As early as January 2000, the WTO passed the EU's prosecution of US section 301, forcing the US to make a series of commitments. The US promised that the implementation of section 301 must comply with WTO regulations.  
This means that it can initiate investigations, but cannot unilaterally sanction other countries based on the conclusions of the investigations.  
"If the US government denies or withdraws these commitments to any degree, it will assume state responsibility. Now the US is blatantly violating its previous commitments. I think it is necessary for the US to read the remark on estoppel in Anglo-American law," Guo said.  
Meanwhile, Guo said China has faithfully fulfilled its WTO accession commitments. "Since China acceded to the WTO in 2001, it has made continued efforts to improve its socialist market economy system, further aligning its policies with multilateral trade rules in all areas. This is in addition to honoring its commitments on opening trade in goods and services and strengthening intellectual property rights protection," he said.  
Guo said remarkable improvements had been made in enhancing the stability, transparency and predictability of its opening-up policies. He noted that China had contributed significantly to the effective operation of the multilateral trading system.  
He said China has been liberalizing and facilitating trade and investment, safeguarding the dispute settlement mechanism and fully participating in trade policy review.  
"China has called upon the WTO to focus more on the concerns of developing members as opposed to unilateralism and protectionism, and uphold the authority and efficacy of the multilateral trading system," he said.  
Guo said accession to the WTO has boosted China's development and benefited the rest of the world. He said China pursues a mutually beneficial opening-up strategy, upholds WTO principles of free trade, and has lived up to its responsibilities as a major country in the process of opening-up.  
"In the future, China will take firm steps to promote the balanced development of trade, facilitate international trade to substantially widen market access for foreign investment, and create a favorable and orderly business environment," he said.  
China's total amount of foreign trade has grown substantially from $509.8 billion in 2001 to $4.3 trillion in 2017, thanks to the country's accession to the WTO.  
"No matter how unilateralism and protectionism make waves, China commits itself to opening-up wider and deeper to promote common development across the world, providing other countries with more opportunities to share the benefits of China's development," he said.  
Guo said China is willing to work hand in hand with its trading partners to make economic globalization more open, inclusive and balanced.

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