

**Title: Regarding deliberations and developments in the fourth WTO ministerial conference held in Doha, Qatar.**

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we shall take up item no. 12 – Statement by the Minister. Shri Murasoli Maran.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): Hon. Speaker, Sir, I rise to make a statement on the outcome of the WTO Ministerial Conference held at Doha, Qatar during 9-14<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 and copies of the Declarations are being placed on the Table of the House.

Before the Doha Ministerial Conference, the Government held wide consultations with various stakeholders and accordingly, I am glad to inform Hon. Members that we made major strides towards realising our goals and the Ministerial Declaration contains significant achievements for India.

Hon. Members may recall that we have attached high priority on resolution of the implementation concerns. The recognition of asymmetries for the first time was a major gain. Some of the implementation concerns have been adequately addressed. The remaining items have been referred either to negotiations or to subsidiary bodies for further examination and thus are an integral part of the Work Programme.

Hon. Members would recall that India had strongly opposed linkage of core labour standards with trade. The Declaration reaffirms that ILO is the appropriate forum to address the core labour standards.

The key concerns of India in agriculture have been adequately safeguarded in the Declaration. The Ministers at Doha committed themselves to negotiations aimed at substantial improvement in market access, substantial reduction in trade

distorting domestic support and gradual phasing out of export subsidies. The special and differential treatment for developing countries including recognition of food security and rural development have now become an integral part of the mandated Agricultural Negotiations.

In services, the movement of natural persons has been given primary focus apart from reaffirmation of the guidelines and procedures of negotiations which is largely based on the Indian proposal.

On the four Singapore issues, trade and investment, trade and competition, transparency in Government procurement and trade facilitation, the study process will continue until the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference and a decision regarding any negotiation would be based on explicit consensus.

A separate landmark declaration on TRIPS and Public Health is a major achievement in which India played a key role. It recognises the affordability and availability of medicines as a universal right. It would now enable member countries to take measures to protect public health as the Declaration recognises the flexibility under the TRIPS Agreement when dealing with public health problems affecting human beings, such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other epidemics and the respective national governments would decide about emergencies and epidemics and take appropriate measures to ensure access to medicine.

In the context of the TRIPS Agreement, we have been raising the issue of extension of higher level of protection for geographical indications as provided for in the Agreement to items other than wines and spirits. This issue will be specifically taken up by the TRIPS Council for considering extension to products like Basmati rice, Alphonso Mangoes, Darjeeling tea, etc. It has also been agreed that the Council for TRIPS will address the issues of biological diversity, protection of traditional knowledge and folklore.

Following the Uruguay Round Agreements (1994), the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) was asked to study certain issues and submit a report whether any modifications in the WTO rules were required. The Doha declaration proposes negotiations on three items, namely, the relationship between the existing WTO rules and Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), process for regular information exchange between MEAs and WTO and negotiations for market access for environmental goods and services. As is known, India is already a signatory to most of these MEAs and I would like to assure hon. Members that these negotiations would not widen the environmental window in trade.

Negotiations in the area of market access on non-agricultural products will focus on reduction or elimination of tariff peaks, tariff escalations and other non-tariff barriers which we had broadly flagged as priority area in any such negotiations. It also recognises the special needs and interests of developing countries including through less than full reciprocity in reduction commitments.

Negotiations have also been mandated under the Anti-dumping and Subsidies Agreements. The various implementation proposals on these subjects will also become part of the negotiations.

There is also a clear commitment to review the provisions for Special and Differential treatment for developing countries in various WTO agreements to see how these provisions can be strengthened, made more precise, effective and operational. These are very welcome features.

Hon. Members would agree that the Doha outcome is in conformity with the shared stakeholders' interests – the interests of agriculture, industry and most importantly our development. ...(*Interruptions*) In sum, the Doha mandate will not in any way harm us; on the contrary, we have substantial gains.

Hon. Members, before I conclude, I would like to say that this is only the beginning. Permit me to highlight the point that the said negotiations are expected to be completed hopefully by 2005 and so there is enough time for us to reflect and effectively negotiate. Since these issues transcend party concerns, I earnestly seek your co-operation in this national endeavour in the international framework.

**WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION \***

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

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**MINISTERIAL DECLARATIONS**

\* (Placed in Library See No. LT 4234/2001)

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN (TIRUNELVELI): Mr. Speaker, we want a discussion on this issue. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, there has to be a discussion on this statement. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You are now allowing your Member to speak. I have already called Shri V.M. Sudheeran...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): There should be a discussion on this.

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN : There should be a detailed discussion on the hon. Minister's statement. ...(*Interruptions*)