

# **Intervention by HCIM at the Plenary Session of 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO**

1. Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Co-chair, Madam Director General, Ministers, Ambassadors, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen - warm greetings to all.
2. On behalf of the Indian delegation, I thank the co-hosts of the MC12 for their efforts in organizing this much delayed Conference.

3. I carry the **aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians** who, despite global challenges, are actively participating as trusted partners in making this planet a better place.
  
4. Mr. Chairman, the humanitarian crisis triggered by spiraling food inflation is a matter of deep concern, and reminds us of the importance of nurturing domestic capacities to produce food. Rising food prices threaten the survival of millions and subjugate the poor and vulnerable nations/people to imperfect markets.

5. Our collective moral obligation is to ensure that **no person, anywhere in the world, goes to bed hungry** and WTO rules should facilitate this. The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced once again the need and efficacy of food stockholding for public good. After the Bali Ministerial Decision in 2013, the General Council in 2014 mandated **permanent solution on the issue of public foodstocks, which has already been delayed, should be the topmost priority** for MC12, before we move to new areas. Nothing is more important than this for the people of the world.

6. The pandemic reinforced the importance of “**One Earth One Health**”, calling for global solidarity and collective action. My country ramped up supplies of medical products to provide medical and health items globally. Unfortunately, the WTO could not respond with alacrity. We have let down the people of the LDCs and developing countries. **The rich countries need to introspect!** We need to **bow our heads in shame** for our inability to respond to the pandemic in time.

7. Mr. Chairman, living in harmony with Nature is enshrined in our Indian culture. Traditional fishing communities in India customarily worship nature and use sustainable methods of fishing. They do not fish during the breeding season to allow stocks to be replenished, thereby maintaining the aquatic ecological balance.

8. Fishing by my country's traditional fishermen and women is to address hunger, poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, which is largely sustenance fishing. Their right to life and livelihood cannot be curtailed in any manner. On the contrary, those nations responsible for depleted fish-stock should assume responsibility, having exploited the oceans for far too long by giving subsidies. Fisheries are global public commons and should be shared equitably considering the past and being mindful of future to strike the right balance on the principles of **common but differentiated responsibility**. For food security and eradication of hunger, **sustainable fishing**

**is as important as agriculture**, which is an important SDG goal. **Let us not repeat the mistakes of the Uruguay round in Agriculture in a Fisheries agreement.**

9. WTO reform is necessary keeping development at its core, to be decided through a precise, transparent and inclusive process, upholding the basic principles and objectives of the WTO, particularly consensus-based decision making and S&DT.

10. India strongly believes that the WTO should not negotiate rules on non-trade-related subjects like climate change, gender, etc. which legitimately fall within the domain of other inter-governmental organisations.

11. India reiterates our Prime Minister's clarion call for sustainable living through "**Lifestyle For Environment (LiFE)**", a movement aimed at promoting environment-conscious lifestyle, focusing on "mindful and deliberate utilization" instead of "mindless and destructive consumption". Mahatma Gandhi had said that "***the world has enough for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed***".

12. In conclusion, let me say that when the world is facing severe challenges and expects the WTO to deliver solutions, the MC12 must send a strong message that the rich care for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized people and that we have come together to give them a better future.
13. The WTO should embrace a **people first approach to trade.**

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