

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 680
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22nd JULY, 2022

WTO TREATY ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

680. SHRI JOHN BRITTAS:

Will the Minister of **COMMERCE & INDUSTRY** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the World Trade Organization (WTO) clinched a new multilateral agreement for restricting fisheries subsidies at its Twelfth Ministerial Conference in Geneva;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the stand taken by Government towards the new treaty and during its discussion stage;
- (d) whether Government has come across criticisms being raised that the restriction on fisheries subsidies, without having exceptions for developing countries, are detrimental to the interests of developing countries including India; and
- (e) if so, the response of Government thereto?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SMT. ANUPRIYA PATEL)

- (a) & (b): The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (Agreement) agreed at the recently concluded World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial meeting will prohibit subsidies from being provided for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfished stocks. Under the Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have been allowed a transition period of two years from the date of entry into force of this Agreement. The Agreement also prohibits providing subsidies for fishing on high seas, which are outside the jurisdiction of coastal countries and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations/ Arrangements (RFMO/As).

As per the Agreement, no prohibition has been imposed on a WTO Member regarding granting or maintaining subsidy to its vessel or operator as long as it is not carrying out IUU. Similarly, no prohibition on providing subsidies has been imposed for fishing

regarding overfished stocks as long as such subsidies are implemented to rebuild the stock to a biologically sustainable level.

- (c) : India's stand is that we are one of the lowest fisheries subsidisers despite such a large population and one of the disciplined nations in sustainably harnessing the fisheries resources. India does not exploit the resources indiscriminately like other advanced fishing nations and India's fisheries sector primarily depends on several millions of small-scale and traditional fishers. Therefore, those WTO Members who have provided huge subsidies in the past, and engaged in large-scale industrial fishing, which is responsible for the depletion of fish stocks, should take more obligations to prohibit subsidies based on the 'polluter pay principle' and 'common but differentiated responsibilities'.
- (d) & (e) : The Agreement will eliminate the subsidies granted to fishing vessels or fishing operators engaged in IUU fishing. Such disciplining will check large-scale IUU fishing which deprives coastal countries like India of fisheries resources, thereby significantly impacting the livelihoods of our fishing communities. This Agreement also provides flexibility to extend subsidies concerning overfished stocks if measures are taken to rebuild fish stocks to a biologically sustainable level, which supports our fishing communities. Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries have been allowed Special and Differential Treatment, with no obligation to implement disciplines for a period of two years from the date of entry into force of the Agreement.
