

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

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 628**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON 20<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2022**

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF WTO**

628. SHRI SUBBARAYAN K.:

Will the Minister of **COMMERCE & INDUSTRY** (वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री) be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India has attended the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) held in Geneva in June this year;
- (b) if so, the details of the main issues raised in the Conference by India and other developing countries and the outcome thereof; and
- (c) the details of India's position on food security and fisheries during the said Conference along with the outcome thereof?

**ANSWER**

वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती अनुप्रिया पटेल)

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

(a) : Yes, Sir.

(b) : At the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) the issues on which a consensus-based decision was reached after negotiations were adopted as Ministerial decisions and declarations. The main issues raised by India and other developing countries included public stockholding for food security purposes, WTO reforms, Custom duties on e-Commerce, TRIPS waiver for Covid-19 pandemic and Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) in fisheries subsidies and other areas.

The outcomes of the MC12 were: (a) Decision to reinvigorate the work under the Work Programme on e-Commerce (WPEC) and extension of the moratorium on custom duties on electronic transmissions, latest by 31 March, 2024 (b) Declaration on the WTO Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and preparedness for future Pandemics (c) Decision on TRIPS Agreement (d) Agreement on disciplining

fisheries subsidies (e) Decision on exempting World Food Programme (WFP) humanitarian food purchases from export prohibitions or restrictions and (f) Declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity. Further, an Outcome Document of MC12 was also adopted, which, inter alia, includes working towards WTO reform. In addition, the MC12 adopted (a) Work Programme on Small Economies (b) TRIPS non-violation and situation complaints and (c) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Declaration.

- (c) : The MC12 of the WTO concluded with, inter alia, a declaration on food insecurity and an agreement on fisheries subsidies.

Food security is a priority issue for India. Based on earlier decisions at the WTO, India's public stockholding programmes continue to be protected by a 'peace clause' which is available till a permanent solution is reached. India accordingly seeks a permanent solution for public stockholding but at the same time ensuring that our interests in all agriculture areas are protected.

The MC12 outcome on food security is a decision regarding exemption of World Food Programme (WFP) purchases from export prohibitions or restrictions. However, this decision shall not prevent the adoption by any Member of measures to ensure its domestic food security in accordance with the relevant WTO agreements.

In order to set right the imbalance in the high subsidies given by advanced fishing nations and to achieve equity, India proposed no prohibition on subsidies granted by developing countries for low income, resource poor or livelihood fishing related activities up to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a sufficiently long transition period for future fishing or fishing-related activities, including distant water fishing, the need to incorporate 'Common But Differentiated Responsibility' (CBDR) and 'polluter pays' principle. India also sought S&DT in fisheries subsidies.

The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies agreed at the MC12 will prohibit subsidies being provided for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfished stocks. As S&DT, developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), have been allowed additional transition period of two years after the entry in to force of the Agreement. The Agreement also prohibits subsidies in high seas, which are outside the jurisdiction of coastal countries and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations/ Arrangements (RFMO/As).

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