

***WTO must strengthen rule-based framework and multilateral negotiations***  
**Need for stronger political will to ensure early harvest on trade facilitation at  
WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali: Indonesian Minister, Mari Elka Pangestu**

**NEW DELHI, April 1, 2013.** Dr. Mari Elka Pangestu, Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia and Candidate for the Position of Director General, WTO, today underlined the importance of continuing to strengthen rule-based framework of the WTO and making progress on the multilateral negotiations.

“We need a stronger political will to guide Geneva negotiators to ensure deliverables at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali this December as early harvest especially on trade facilitation in order to generate momentum and to move on to completing the Doha Development Agenda after the Bali meeting,” she said at a roundtable discussion on ***‘Vision for the WTO, WTO Engagement with Private Sector and Complex Reality of Modern Trade’***, organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI).

The foremost challenge ahead for the WTO was how to interpret the ‘vision’ for the WTO, she said and added that this could be looked at from two perspectives - how to meet the immediate challenges and how to keep the relevance of WTO undiluted in the years ahead.

WTO faces the inevitable question of whether there was a lack of interest in multilateral trade agenda. It can be seen that proliferation of FTAs may lead to dilution of the WTO, thus causing irreparable damage to the organization and its credibility.

Also, the traditional approach to trade was ‘export is good, import is bad’. However, now this was ill-suited to a world in which the import content of exported goods was around 40%. Here, the challenge was, for both the government and business, to align their policies, priorities and business model to the growing complexities of modern trade.

Dr. Pangestu highlighted the relevance of WTO in the international trade and the importance to safeguard and monitor global rules. The simplicity of a single framework for global trade, standards and rules was the key to ensuring all countries, developed, and developing countries, including small countries and all companies, including SMEs, can participate in global trade. It will also be important for the efficient functioning of the global value chain.

Different approaches of trade opening such as through bilateral and regional agreements as well as a plurilateral agreement such as the one on services currently were discussed, and can be viewed as positive progress, she added. The need was to manage them in a way that they remain consistent and complementary to the multilateral trading system.

She underscored the importance of inclusion and added, “I would ensure that the opportunities from global free trade benefit everyone, men and women, in developed, least developed countries and developing countries, for big business and SMEs”.

**Mr. Rizali W Indrakesuma, Ambassador of Indonesia to India,** pointed out, “Indonesia attached great importance to the role of the WTO in reassuring that the global economic system supports world economy and development in accordance with emerging new challenges resulting from contemporary global economic and financial crisis.” He added, “Indonesia also aspires to directly contribute in supporting the WTO in its role of assuring an open, fair and rules-based multilateral trading system.”

**Dr. Arbind Prasad, Director General, FICCI,** suggested that “To meet the immediate challenges, it may be necessary to pursue fresh, innovative approaches to get the WTO talks back on track. Medium-to-long term challenges to the multilateral trading system and WTO go far beyond.” He reiterated FICCI’s commitment to WTO and the rules-based multilateral system. FICCI has actively engaged with WTO members as well as WTO as an institution and well recognizes the importance of the institution.