

# COVID-19 and a Global Call to the WTO Members

## Pledge for Trade as a Global Public Good

1. Along with a huge number of losses of human lives and concomitant miseries, the on-going global pandemic as a result of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is creating havoc in all walks of life. Economic, social and political life across the world has got disrupted and is expected to unfold further in the coming weeks, months and may be years. It is having and will have serious ramifications across various sectors, international trade being a major one of them.

2. Food and pharmaceuticals including medical devices are and will be expected to face significant demand- and supply-side shocks.

3. According to a Joint Statement by the heads of the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the WTO: “Now is the time to show solidarity, act responsibly and adhere to our common goal of enhancing food security, food safety and nutrition and improving the general welfare of people around the world. We must ensure that our response to COVID-19 does not unintentionally create unwarranted shortages of essential items and exacerbate hunger and malnutrition.”

4. With this spirit in mind, we, the members of the global trade community at large and representing all stakeholder of international trade – producers, consumers, traders, workers, CSO representatives, academia, etc. – urge upon the WTO Members to take a pledge for the following **Seven-Point Action Agenda for Protecting and Promoting the Integrity of the Multilateral Trading System**:

- 1) Avoid upward revision of applied MFN (Most-Favoured-Nation) tariffs across all tariff lines for a period of two years
- 2) Utilise all possible measures/alternatives to maintain services trade, particularly in sectors of interest to developing and least-developed countries
- 3) Consider temporary moratorium on anti-dumping, countervailing and other trade restrictive measures on exports from least-developed countries and small and vulnerable economies

- 4) Avoid export restrictions on food and pharmaceutical items and products including medical devices and, along with necessary technical assistance and capacity building measures, make effective use of flexibilities provided in the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights – such as compulsory licensing – for enhancing local production of these products
- 5) Avoid raising trade disputes at the WTO as under the existing mechanisms and instead constitute an arbitration panel for resolving disputes without resorting to trade restrictive measures
- 6) Enhance monitoring and transparency functions of the WTO vis-a-vis the proposed measures
- 7) Promote cross-border electronic commerce, particularly in those products produced by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) including women-led/owned/managed MSMEs

4. Finally, we call upon all the WTO Members to virtually convene a Special Session of the WTO General Council to discuss and adopt this Action Agenda.

Signatures:

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
1.	Pascal Lamy	Former Director General, WTO
2.	Supachai Panitchpakdi	Former Secretary-General, UNCTAD and Former Director General, WTO
3.	Pradeep S Mehta	Founder and Secretary General, CUTS International
4.	Debapriya Bhattacharya	Former Ambassador of Bangladesh to the WTO
5.	Sujeev Shakya	Founder, Nepal Economic Forum
6.	Atiur Rahman	Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank
7.	Mustafizur Rahman	Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
8.	Henry Gao	Associate Professor, Singapore Management University
9.	Posh Raj Pandey	Chairman, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment
10.	Purushottam Ojha	Former Commerce Secretary, GON Consultant on Trade, Transit, Investment and Private Sector Development
11.	C Raja Mohan	Director, Institute of South Asian Studies
12.	Supperamiam Manickam	Former Permanent Representative to WTO, Malaysia
13.	Peter Holmes	Department of Economics, University of Sussex
14.	Rorden Wilkinson	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education & Student Experience), UNSW Sydney

15.	Jayanta Roy	Former Economic Advisor, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India
16.	Jim Rollo	Professor Emeritus, University of Sussex and Deputy Director, UK Trade Policy Observatory
17.	Naushad Forbes	Co-Chairman, Forbes Marshall Pvt. Ltd.
18.	Nelson Ndirangu	Chairman, Competition Authority of Kenya
19.	Isaac Hubert Arthur	Executive Director, Africa Centre for International Trade and Development
20.	Jane S Nalunga	Country Director, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI-Uganda)
21.	Vijay Kelkar	Chairman, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi
22.	Bruce Stokes	Executive Director, Transatlantic Task Force: Together or Alone? German Marshall Fund of the United States
23.	M. Ann Tutwiler	Former Deputy Director General, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization