



India at the WTO’s Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12)

With two days to go for the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12), global attention will soon shift to Geneva to see whether the WTO can deliver on pressing global trade issues. MC12 will be held in the backdrop of conflict, severe debt distress, rising food and oil prices and volatility in the global commodity markets.

From India’s perspective, some of the most important issues requiring an urgent resolution include first, a WTO intellectual property-based response to the pandemic; second, a permanent resolution of the issue on Public Stockholding (PSH); third, the culmination of the negotiations on fisheries subsidies; and fourth, lifting the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions.

The WTO intellectual property response to the pandemic will be based on the informal process conducted by the Quad (European Union, India, South Africa and the United States). The outcome is a compromise on the countries’ original negotiating positions. It covers only patents applicable to COVID-19 vaccines, with the possibility of expanding coverage to diagnostics and therapeutics in the six months after a decision is formalised.

Due to the ongoing food crisis, agriculture is another top priority at MC12. India and the G-33 nations seek a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security. Meanwhile, India is opposing the decision on exemption of food purchases by the World Food Programme (WFP) from any export restrictions, highlighting the need to retain policy space while contributing to humanitarian needs.

On fisheries, after more than two decades of negotiations, an outcome seems to be in sight. However, for India and other developing countries, the Agreement will necessarily have to accommodate legitimate demands for special and differential treatment to allow the development of the lagging fisheries sector.

Finally, another bid to safeguard domestic policy space includes the review of the e-commerce moratorium at the WTO. In anticipation of rapid digitisation and advancement of technologies like 3D printing, India will be seeking a lifting of the moratorium to plug revenue losses and safeguard MSME interests.

This edition of CUTS Occasional News Wrap (ONW) captures news and developments at the WTO and perspectives on trade-related issues. This ONW is categorised into two sections:

- News & developments at the WTO
- Perspectives on trade issues

News & developments at the WTO

1.	<p><i>DG Okonjo-Iweala and negotiations chair join call to 'stop the fish meltdown' on Ocean Day</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 8, 2022</p>	<p>On the occasion of World Ocean Day on 8 June, Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Ambassador Santiago Wills, chair of the fisheries subsidies negotiations, stood with environmental groups in urging WTO members to forge a long-awaited agreement to curb harmful fisheries subsidies at the upcoming 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12).</p>
2.	<p><i>WTO report highlights role of trade in meeting SDGs and assisting economic recovery</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 8, 2022</p>	<p>The WTO has highlighted the role of trade in helping countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic in a report submitted to the UN's High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development to be held in July.</p>
3.	<p><i>DDG Paugam highlights WTO role in promoting sustainable agriculture</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 7, 2022</p>	<p>At the 2022 edition of the International Grains Conference on 7 June, Deputy Director-General Jean-Marie Paugam stressed the WTO's role in addressing sustainability, international food standards and trade-related climate policies.</p>
4.	<p><i>DG Okonjo-Iweala urges members to seize opportunity at MC12 to deliver meaningful outcomes</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 7, 2022</p>	<p>WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has called on WTO members to make one final effort to deliver substantive results at the upcoming 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in Geneva on 12-15 June.</p>
5.	<p><i>WTO updates joint indicative list of critical COVID-19 vaccine inputs</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 7, 2022</p>	<p>The WTO Secretariat has updated the joint indicative list compiling information on critical inputs for the manufacturing, distributing and administering of COVID-19 vaccines.</p>
6.	<p><i>Chair introduces streamlined agriculture negotiation texts for MC12</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 4, 2022</p>	<p>At a meeting on 4 June, the chair of the agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Gloria Abraham Peralta (Costa Rica), introduced revised versions of three draft negotiating texts based on feedback from delegates at the 1-2 June meeting.</p>

7.	<p><i>WTO-World Bank publication stresses key role of trade in responding to health crises</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 3, 2022</p>	<p>Trade plays a critical role in ensuring access to medical goods and services during global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
8.	<p><i>DG Okonjo-Iweala: Time for members to show restraint and agree on texts for MC12</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 2, 2022</p>	<p>With the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) fast approaching, the DG urged members to restrain their comments to the extent possible so that “simple, short, beautiful and balanced” texts could be sent for ministers’ consideration.</p>
9.	<p><i>New report highlights positive impact of WTO technical assistance activities</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 2, 2022</p>	<p>The WTO Technical Assistance Annual Report, published on 2 June, outlines how the WTO Secretariat delivered training activities to developing and least-developed countries (LDCs) and observer governments in 2021 despite the constraints posed by COVID-19.</p>
10.	<p><i>Trade thoughts, from Geneva, by DDG Anabel González</i></p> <p>World Trade Organisation</p> <p>June 2, 2022</p>	<p>In less than two weeks, ministers will be descending on Geneva for the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference. There, they will seek to get results on fisheries subsidies and agriculture, including subsidies-related elements. On industrial subsidies, discussions have intensified in recent times, but mostly outside the WTO.</p>
Perspectives on trade issues		
1.	<p><i>WTO dysfunction marks turning point to new era of trade tensions</i></p> <p>Bryce Baschuk</p> <p>Bloomberg</p> <p>June 10, 2022</p>	<p>If you’re not seated at the table, you’re on the menu. That old saying about the cut-throat nature of trade negotiations will be put to the test next week when officials gather in Geneva for the first meeting of the World Trade Organization’s highest decision-making body in nearly five years.</p>
2.	<p><i>WTO Ministerial Conference 2022: India must ensure the proposed text incorporates medical services</i></p> <p>Shantanu Nandan Sharma</p> <p>The Economic Times</p> <p>June 10, 2022</p>	<p>The increasing roles of new players (such as China and India) notwithstanding, trade in medical goods and services remains highly concentrated, with high income economies representing the bulk of exports and imports.</p>

3.	<p><i>Fishworkers ask govt to not sign WTO pact</i></p> <p>Dilasha Seth Livemint June 10, 2022</p>	<p>The fisheries subsidies proposal at the WTO aims to eliminate subsidies for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and promote sustainable fishing. India is pressing for a longer transition period under the agreement as the sector is still at a nascent stage.</p>
4.	<p><i>Govt set to pitch for grain sales from public stockholding at WTO meet</i></p> <p>Subhomoy Bhattacharjee Business Standard June 10, 2022</p>	<p>India will strongly pitch for foodgrain sales from public stockholdings to address the global food crisis, like those in wheat, at the WTO 12th Ministerial Conference at Geneva, beginning next week.</p>
5.	<p><i>Have India and South Africa, Lead Sponsors of the TRIPS Waiver Proposal, Reconciled to a Weak Text?</i></p> <p>Priti Patnaik The Wire June 08, 2022</p>	<p>After more than 18 months of bringing their bold proposal at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to temporarily suspend some intellectual property protections to decisively address COVID-19 in an effort to enable local manufacturing capacity, sponsors India and South Africa do not seem to be leading from the front.</p>
6.	<p><i>India should stick to its guns at WTO meet</i></p> <p>Amiti Sen The Hindu Business Line June 09, 2022</p>	<p>While India may have little to gain at the WTO MC12, the country must not lose the war of perceptions that the developed nations are sure to wage over emotive issues such as food security, the environment and public health.</p>
7.	<p><i>Why Removing WTO Moratorium on E-Commerce Will Aid Developing World's Post-COVID Recovery</i></p> <p>Rashmi Banga The Wire June 08, 2022</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of international trade as it has given a new boost to ‘online’ imports, especially in developing countries which are mostly the net importers of digitalised products.</p>
8.	<p><i>Will the WTO wake up to the food crisis?</i></p> <p>Jayant Dasgupta and Sachin Kumar Sharma The Hindu Business Line June 07, 2022</p>	<p>Ignoring this long-standing demand from developing countries representing more than 60 per cent of the world population, especially in the context of a looming global food crisis, puts a serious question mark on the credibility and relevance of the WTO in the global fight against hunger.</p>

9.	<p><i>Quo Vadis, World Trade Organization?</i> Ieva Baršauskaitė and Alice Tipping International Institute for Sustainable Development June 07, 2022</p>	<p>The choice before members is what sort of cooperation they want to pursue at the WTO and whether they are prepared to move past their frustrations into constructive dialogue with each other.</p>
10.	<p><i>Credibility of WTO rests on whether the more powerful member states can rise to the occasion in Geneva</i> Mohan Kumar The Economic Times June 06, 2022</p>	<p>The credibility of WTO rests on whether the more powerful member states can rise to the occasion at MC12 in Geneva. Failure to do so will not just dent their image but will also call into question the very raison d'etre of the WTO.</p>



D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India.
Ph: +91.141.228 2821 Fx: +91.141.228 2485,
E-mail: citee@cuts.org, Web: www.cuts-international.org.

Also at Delhi, Calcutta and Chittorgarh (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland); and Washington DC (USA).