

**General Council Meeting
October 13, 2020**

**

Statement by India – Delivered by Ambassador & PR to the WTO

Agenda Item 11: ‘Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration – Reports on Meetings of June, July and September 2020 (WT/BF/186, WT/BFA/187 , WT/BFA/188)’

Thank you Chair, for your statement.

2. While we are reasonably satisfied with the work of the CBFA this year, including progress in the discussions on budget, I wish to bring to the attention of this Council the following 4 issues:

- i. **Report of the External Auditor:** The report of the Independent External Auditor on the WTO budget 2019 has pointed out irregularities in recruitment, procurement policies that are inconsistent with WTO policies and commonly accepted practices globally. We hope the Secretariat will address these issues expeditiously.
- ii. **Trust Funds:** The report of the Independent External Auditor has also noted serious concerns over the way in which the Trust Funds are being managed by the WTO. It has recommended that the WTO should critically review its Trust funds Policy. These are the same concerns that India and other members have been raising for the past several years and we have not seen much progress in implementing measures to improve the management of Trust Funds. Auditor’s Report is a wake-up call for members and should help us work towards a better system to govern the Trust Funds.
- iii. **Budget-cut:** Austerity begins at home. For us, WTO is our home. As the global economy battles a significant recession, WTO members across the developed and developing countries are experiencing significant budgetary constraints. Though it appears that member contributions have remained the same over the years, the currency depreciation has in fact increased the nominal contribution outgo for majority of members. I call upon the Secretariat and the WTO membership to consider a voluntary short-term cut in the budget of the organization, as a symbol of solidarity with the members who are battling a grave economic situation. I hope we can consider this for the budget for 2021 and 2022.
