

## **WTO meet starts; India, China press for Doha round conclusion**

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**Nairobi:** Trade ministers of as many as 47 countries, including India, China and several African nations, today asked the WTO members to "redouble" efforts to conclude pending issues of the long-stalled Doha Round.

On the first day of the WTO ministerial meeting here, the 47 nations in a joint statement said they recognise that a comprehensive conclusion of the Doha Developmental Agenda (DDA) with economically meaningful and balanced outcomes will provide impetus to global trade liberalisation and facilitation.

It would also correct the development deficit in the rules resulting from the previous rounds of multilateral trade negotiations and improve the trading prospects of developing Members, and enhance the primary role of the WTO in global trade governance, the joint statement said.

"We need to redouble our efforts to enable us to proceed towards the full, successful and multilateral conclusion of the negotiations ... of the Doha Ministerial Declaration in fulfilment of the commitments we took at Doha," it said.

The statement assumes significance as developed countries have stated that they do not want to move ahead with the Doha Round, negotiations for which started in 2001.

Besides India and China, the joint statement was signed by trade ministers of South Africa, Venezuela, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco and Zambia, among others.

Backed by several developing countries, India is strongly pitching for finding a permanent solution to the food security issue and a mechanism to protect poor farmers from surge in imports at the WTO meeting of 162 trade ministers, which kick started today.

Speaking at the opening session of the WTO meeting, Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta emphasised on the importance of the pending issues of the Doha Round.

Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Kenyan President statement has given a very powerful opening to the meeting.

"They remain important and they will continue to be."

Indeed, agriculture plays a fundamental role in many of the world's economy and we must do all we can to ensure that these issues are addressed," Chair of the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade Amina Mohamed told reporters here.

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