

# With growing focus on environment, WTO to play active role in COP 27

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The WTO is set to deepen its presence at the UN Climate Change COP 27 beginning this weekend in Egypt with Director General Ngozi Okonjo Iweala participating in at least three events, including the launch of WTO's 2022 World Trade Report on *Climate Change and International Trade*.

This is in step with grow-

ing focus on environment at the WTO. But the need to guarantee that environment protection is not used as a justification for protectionism is a worry raised by emerging nations, especially India, according to some experts.

## NON-TARIFF BARRIER

"Developed countries appear to be using the trade and environment linkage ostensibly for protecting environment and addressing climate change. How-

ever, in reality, it is turning out to be a mercantilist, market access agenda for promoting exports of their goods and services," pointed out Delhi-based trade expert Abhijit Das.

This also helps developed nations seek a legal justification for erecting non-tariff barriers for exports from developing countries, he said.

At COP 27, the WTO DG will speak at the 'roundtable on food security' co-convened by Egypt and the

World Economic Forum on November 7. The next day, she will address a session on 'accelerating adaptation in Africa', co-organised by the African Union and Global Center for Adaptation.

On November 9, Iweala will speak on 'Implementing trade-related contributions to the global response to climate change and launch of World Trade Report on Climate Change.'

"The WTO will play an active role in the upcoming UN Climate Change COP27

— it will also take part in events to discuss issues regarding trade and climate change," according to a note on the WTO website.

With developed nations, especially the EU and the US, pushing environment in all their bilateral trade agreements, the trade and environment linkage is gaining greater legitimacy, pointed out Biswajit Dhar, Professor, JNU.

"While the WTO and developed nations are taking a more pro-active position on

linkage of trade and environment, what is important here is that the UNFCCC itself states that trade restrictions will not be used to achieve climate goals," he said.

## 'SETTING ITS PACE'

According to Article 3.5 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), "Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or un-

justifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade".

India, at the COP 26, resisted developed countries' pressure to agree to a 2050 deadline for achieving 'net zero emissions' and instead pushed it by 20 more years, Dhar pointed out.

This indicates that India wants to follow its own pace in meeting environment targets and may not be pushed into stringent commitments by the WTO, he added.