

# WTO preparatory meet to set stage for 'successful' MC13



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New Delhi, 19 June

In the run up to the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) in February, World Trade Organization (WTO) member-nations are gearing up for a preparatory meet in Geneva for a consensus on the agenda, people aware of the matter said.

The two-day meeting, starting October 23, is an attempt to transform the view that the WTO is losing relevance and is failing in its mission.

This new format of having a preparatory meet ahead of MC13 will give more time to member-nations to be better prepared before negoti-

ating the final outcome next year. More discussions on crucial issues will increase the probability of having successful outcomes at the MC13 meet. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal will attend the preparatory meet.

“Normally these issues are discussed by diplomats in Geneva. It’s a new format that the WTO is proposing this time, so that there is a general agreement on what should be the agenda items and what could be the outcomes,” the person cited above said.

“When the ministers (ultimately)

meet for two-three days, it is slightly challenging to arrive at the outcome. This time the approach is they should

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build some consensus on the issues (before MC13),” the person added.

The last ministerial conference had to be extended by two more days to push negotiations.

MC13 will take place in February in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE).

The ministerial conference is the highest decision-making body of the WTO and can take decisions on all matters under any of the

multilateral trade agreements. The last ministerial — MC12 — took place in June 2022 in Geneva.

In MC12, 164 member nations of the WTO forged deals with convergence on key issues like subsidies on fishery, a waiver of requirements concerning compulsory licensing for Covid-19 vaccines, food safety and agriculture, as well as WTO reform.

The last ministerial meeting saw decisions on all items except getting a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security, which continues to remain India’s priority.

The issue will be taken up at the MC13 meeting in February.