

China dismisses criticism at WTO

By Wang Cong

China on Thursday defended its role at the WTO as it faces rising criticism from some WTO members, saying that it has fulfilled its promise to the multilateral trade body and its continued reform efforts have created great opportunities for global economic growth and tangible benefits for trade and investment partners.

As the WTO started a biennial review of China's trade policies, which comes amid rising unilateralism and trade protectionism particularly in the US, Chinese officials urged other countries to stop their unfair criticism of China and called on fellow WTO members to fight the trade bully.

"We urge certain members not to look at China through colored glasses and characterize China using outdated thinking," Gao Feng, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, told a briefing on Thursday. "Since joining the WTO, China has always complied with WTO rules and fulfilled its obligations as a responsible member."

Leading the way

Gao's comment followed an earlier speech by Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Wang Shouwen at the 7th WTO Trade Policy Review of China in Geneva, which highlighted China's contribution to the global economy.

"As it prepares itself for globalization, China has created important opportunities for the world economic growth and delivered tangible benefits to its trade and investment partners," Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Wang Shouwen told a WTO session on Wednesday.

Wang pointed out that between 2001, when China first joined the WTO, and 2017, China's imports grew at an annual average rate of 13.5 percent, twice as fast as

the global average, while imports of services rose by 16.7 percent during the period, 2.7 times that of the global average.

As part of the WTO review, China received 1,963 written questions from 42 members. Wang said China has answered the 1,627 questions submitted before June 28 and will answer the rest within a month in accordance with WTO rules.

While China received slightly more questions this time, "there was no significant increase," said Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, noting that the review is "merely a platform" for communication.

"It is natural for other members to have questions about China. If there is any problem, that's OK, because we can easily address it through WTO rules," He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), told the Global Times on Thursday. "But if some countries criticize China using their own standards, then that's irrelevant."

Ironic criticism

Citing alleged harmful industrial policies and the forced transfer of foreign technologies, US officials reportedly said at the meeting that China had failed to abide by WTO rules and called for "a reckoning" over China. The EU, Japan and other members will reportedly join the US in criticizing China at the meeting.

"By using its own standards at the WTO, it's the US which is not abiding by WTO rules," He said, adding that the WTO is a multilateral body and that the US cannot dictate its procedures, especially after its recent unilateral and projectionist actions.

The US has taken a series of actions against China and other WTO members. It has slapped tariffs on Chinese goods worth \$34 billion, while threatening tariffs on as much as \$200 billion more.

"It is absurd that the US is trying to use the very same organization it ignores in its unilateral actions to restrain China," He said, adding that the US has received more than a dozen complaints at the WTO for its unilateral actions, including those from the EU and Japan.

In an apparent reference to the US, Wang called on all WTO members to "firmly stand up to the trade bully, protectionism and unilateralism," saying that the multilateral trading system is confronted with severe challenges.

Source: People's Daily / Global Times