

WTO's Okonjo-Iweala 'ready to go' as she pushes for fisheries deal

By TIOL News Service

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The World Trade Organisation (WTO) General Council immediately after taking office on Monday, Director-General Ms Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala threw her support behind the fisheries deal to curb overfishing.

Calling on members to **"do things differently"**

for achieving the necessary reforms to keep the WTO relevant, Ms Okonjo-Iweala said high expectations for her tenure can only be met if members are willing to compromise and reach agreements.

"I am coming into one of the most important institutions in the world and we have a lot of work to do. I feel ready to go," said the former Nigerian Finance Minister, who is both the first woman and the first African to hold the job.

She ended the six-month leadership void at the WTO by vowing to unblock negotiations on rules to stop overfishing and help scale-up COVID-19 vaccine production and distribution.

The Director-General suggested that prospects for a successful Twelfth Ministerial Conference would be enhanced if members target a manageable number of deliverables for this year, and set up longer work programmes to address issues that cannot realistically be resolved within that timeframe.

"I have said it. It cannot be business as usual. We have to change our approach from debate and rounds of questions to delivering results," she said.

She remains hopeful of cutting a deal on the fisheries subsidies after 20 years of talk as she met members of Stop Funding Overfishing Coalition outside the WTO.

"We have absolutely not a moment to lose because time is short

," she said, telling members that they would hold meetings individually or in groups ahead of the 12th Ministerial Conference later this year.