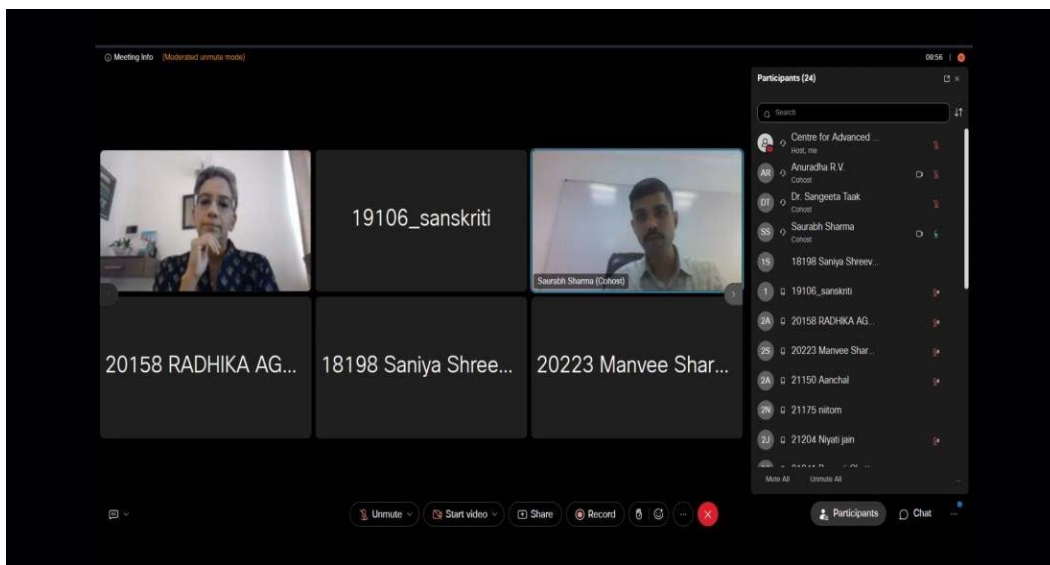


**REPORT**  
**Special Lecture**  
**“Contemporary Challenges to WTO”**  
**31 August 2022**



CASH, RGNUL organized an online Special Lecture via Cisco WebEx on the topic “Contemporary Challenges to WTO” on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, Wednesday at 4 pm. The lecture was delivered by Ms. R.V. Anuradha, Partner at Clarus Law Associates, New Delhi. She deliberated on WTO as a system of multilateral rules of the trade that has been in existence since 1995. Later, she highlighted several challenges in the past few years and history leading up to WTO, with GATT being its forerunner. She then discussed its dispute settlement function, which is often seen as its “crown jewel”, and is now being rendered dysfunctional with the non-appointment of members to the Appellate Body. The mechanism often leads to “Appeal in the void”.

Ms. Anuradha described that India is castigated and labeled as an obstructionist, for trying to revive the commitments of the Doha Round, by developed countries. The growing economic and financial disparity is perceptible amongst developing and developed nations, leading to rules framed under WTO Agreements being constantly undermined. She raised some pertinent issues, such as: is there still a value for multilateralism, and if yes, what should be India's role?

Furthermore, she discussed the world of bilateral and regional free trade agreements that have been seeing a lot more action; with over 350 agreements notified to the WTO. Among the largest of these are the CPTPP Agreement and the RCEP Agreement. These agreements also address several new issues such as Environment, Labour, Sustainable Development, Gender, etc. India is also negotiating several new FTAs which are likely to have rules governing these areas. She focused on specific issues, namely Agreement on Agriculture, Technical barriers to trade, and apposite rules made by WTO in this regard. WTO frowns upon any such subsidy which enhances production in agriculture, yet developed nations are able to tweak the interpretation of such rules and are readily providing such subsidies under the guise of "Research and Innovation". Then, she discussed protectionist regime implemented in President Trump's Era leading to an uprising of anti-globalization sentiments. The underlying cause for such a skewed approach adopted largely by developed nations is their wealth and this has negatively impacted the trade law regimes. She also credited the financial crisis of 2008 as one of the primary reasons for an exponential rise in trade barriers and brushed aside any role of WTO as an institution in plaguing whole regime.

After pointing out the challenges and issues, she then deliberated upon the growing narrative where India is wooed as an alternative to China for fostering supply chains and many countries/regions are utilizing this opportunity to finalize an FTA but this does not excuse the member states to be oblivious to such critical issues. Thereafter, certain questions/doubts from the audience were taken up. Finally, the vote of thanks was extended by a Student Member of CASH, Mr. Kaustabh

