

Chinese elected as WTO judge

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A Chinese lawyer has been elected to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) highest court, becoming the first Chinese to serve on the judicial body.

The WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) has formally appointed Zhang Yuejiao on the seven-member Appellate Body, which issues final rulings in trade disputes, the world trade body announced on Tuesday.

Zhang Yuejiao

The announcement was originally scheduled for last week, but Taiwan's surprise objection blocked the process of the WTO's dispute settlement body that handles disputes worth billions of dollars.

Taiwan lifted its objection after consultations with WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy and senior diplomats.

"China highly appreciates the tremendous efforts" made "to ensure the holding of the DSB's regular meeting, without which the operation of the dispute settlement mechanism, one of the key components of WTO, would have been endangered," China's ambassador to the WTO Sun Zhenyu said in a statement to the DSB yesterday.

Zhang once served as director of the treaty and law department of the erstwhile Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (now the Ministry of Commerce).

As a veteran negotiator, she has taken part in China's talks with its trade partners to settle disputes and its accession into the WTO.

Zhang has worked for the World Bank, too, and is senior counsel for a leading law firm in China. She is widely considered as a sound lawyer with extensive experience both in the public and private sectors.

A law graduate from Rennes University in France and Georgetown University and Columbia University in the US, Zhang is fluent in English and French and teaches law in Guangdong Province's Shantou University.

Jennifer Hillman of the US, Lilia Bautista of the Philippines and Shotaro Oshima of Japan, too, were elected to the WTO Appellate Body, which for the first time includes three women.

Hillman and Bautista will formally join the court next month, while Zhang and Oshima will take their seats in June. (China Daily)

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