



WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 14

28 March 2026 – DAY 3

INTRODUCTION

The third day of the WTO Ministerial Conference 14 (“MC14”) convened on 28 March 2026.

Day 3 saw ministers and senior officials participate in a series of meetings to provide political direction for future work at the WTO, while addressing unresolved issues with the aim of finalising specific decisions, ministerial guidance, and other outcomes.

The ministerial sessions focused on fisheries subsidies, the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement, the e-commerce work programme and moratorium, agriculture, and development, including issues concerning least developed countries.

These sessions were preceded by a report from the Chair of the Dispute Settlement Body (“DSB”), providing an update on ongoing discussions on dispute settlement reform. In addition to this, discussions also focused upon Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement and linkages between trade and climate through ongoing ministerial-level initiatives.

Key updates from Day 3 are summarized below:

SESSION ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

- WTO Member States (“Members”) welcomed the entry into force of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and noted recent acceptances by Paraguay, Samoa, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on 26 March 2026, bringing the total number of acceptances to 119.
- Members also reaffirmed their commitment to continue negotiations on outstanding issues, with a view to strengthening disciplines on fisheries subsidies.¹

¹ World Trade Organization, ‘DG cites MPA as “practical, confidence-building bridge” amid Appellate Body impasse’ (28 March 2026), available at https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_350_e.htm.

- India emphasised the importance of fisheries as a critical source of livelihood and food security, particularly for small, traditional, and artisanal fishermen, and highlighted its longstanding conservation measures such as annual fishing bans. India underscored that challenges relating to overcapacity and overfishing stem primarily from heavily subsidised industrial fleets rather than small-scale fishermen in developing countries.
- While expressing support for the adoption of the draft decision, India stressed that future outcomes must remain equitable, development-oriented, and sensitive to the livelihoods of vulnerable fishing communities.²

INCLUSION OF INVESTMENT FACILITATION DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT (“IDFA”) INTO THE WTO

- India has strongly opposed the incorporation of the China-led IFDA into the WTO framework as an Annex 4 agreement.
- India stated that the IFDA risks eroding the functional limits of the WTO and undermines its foundational principles.³
- However, a large number of Members supported the proposal, with around 60 delegations, including some non-participants, urging its incorporation.
- They emphasised that this step could help unlock investment potential in developing countries and signal confidence in the multilateral trading system. During the session, Bangladesh also announced its decision to

² Piyush Goyal, Twitter

³ Press Trust of India, ‘India opposes China-led investment pact’s inclusion in WTO framework’, *Business Standard* (28 March 2026), available at https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/india-opposes-china-led-investment-pact-s-inclusion-in-wto-framework-126032800917_1.html.

join the IFDA, bringing the total number of co-sponsors to 129.⁴

E-COMMERCE AGREEMENT

- Sixty-six Members, covering approximately 70% of global trade, have adopted a pathway to bring into force the WTO Agreement on Electronic Commerce through interim arrangements.
- This includes Members such as Singapore, Australia, Japan, Canada, China, European Union, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, United Kingdoms, Philippines, Peru, Mauritius, Lao, Gambia, Costa Rica, etc. India and United States are not part of the list.
- The 66 Members will now proceed with their respective domestic procedures. The E-Commerce Agreement will enter into force for those Members that have accepted it, after 45 Members have deposited their instruments of acceptance.
- However, it remains unclear how the proposed interim arrangements for the implementation of the E-Commerce Agreement will operate in practice.
- In parallel, these Members reaffirmed their commitment to seeking incorporation of the E-Commerce Agreement into the WTO legal framework of rules, and indicated that they will continue to engage with and encourage all Members to join the E-Commerce Agreement.⁵ More than 40 Members, including large parts of the African group, have supported extension or making the Moratorium permanent.⁶
- UAE has also encouraged the Members to adhere to the agreement and to support its incorporation into Annex 4 of the WTO framework.⁷

⁴ 'Ministers exchange views on key WTO topics, consider paths forward at MC14', WTO News, available at - https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_352_e.htm

⁵ World Trade Organization, 'Members adopt a pathway to bring into force the WTO Agreement on Electronic Commerce' (28 March 2026), available at - https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_341_e.htm.

⁶ George Riddell, LinkedIn, available at - <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/reading-tea-leaves-mc14-george-riddell-ok6se/?trackingId=jRcTpkeJJr3N%2Fdr6JGgsBg%3D%3D>.

⁷ World Trade Organization, 'Members adopt a pathway to bring into force the WTO Agreement on Electronic Commerce' (28 March 2026), available at - https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_341_e.htm.

- India, while maintaining its opposition, has reportedly shown some flexibility, signalling that it may be willing to drop its resistance to a temporary extension of the e-commerce moratorium, which is currently due to expire, and allow for a two-year extension.⁸
- On the other hand, the United States have referred to it as "legacy-making issue" and indicated that it supports only a permanent moratorium rather than a temporary extension.

SESSION ON AGRICULTURE

- The agriculture session at the conference witnessed extensive discussions among Members on key issues such as market access, food security, public stockholding, and special safeguard measures.
- While most Members indicated their willingness to continue substantive discussions in Geneva, several expressed disappointments over the limited progress on key issues and called for new approaches to advance future negotiations.¹⁰

UPDATE ON DISPUTE SETTLEMENT REFORM

- Prior to the commencement of the main sessions, the Chair of the Dispute Settlement Body provided an update on dispute settlement reform. It was noted that two rounds of consultations were held with Members in July and November 2025 to advance discussions on reform. During these consultations, Members broadly reaffirmed that dispute settlement reform remains a priority, while also recognising the challenging context surrounding the system, and expressed support for

⁸ 'WTO members try to close gap between US, India on e-commerce tariff moratorium', Economic Times (29 March 2026), available at - https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/wto-members-try-to-close-gap-between-us-india-on-e-commerce-tariff-moratorium/articleshow/129874884.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

⁹ 'WTO members try to close gap between US, India on e-commerce tariff moratorium', Economic Times (29 March 2026), available at - https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/wto-members-try-to-close-gap-between-us-india-on-e-commerce-tariff-moratorium/articleshow/129874884.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

¹⁰ World Trade Organization, 'DG cites MPIA as "practical, confidence-building bridge" amid Appellate Body impasse' (28 March 2026), available at - https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_350_e.htm.

resuming work after MC14 when conditions become more conducive.¹¹

- On the sidelines of Day 3 of the MC14, India reiterated its support for a reformed, relevant, and effective WTO during a meeting with the WTO Reform Minister-Facilitators. India emphasised the importance of upholding the foundational principles, particularly consensus-based decision-making, most-favoured-nation rule-based trade, and special and differential treatment as essential elements for ensuring equity and balance in the multilateral trading system.¹²

MULTI-PARTY INTERIM APPEAL ARBITRATION ARRANGEMENT (“MPIA”)

- The MPIA parties issued a joint statement reaffirming their support for the mechanism and encouraging other Members to join.
- The WTO Director-General stated that MPIA is serving as a ‘practical, confidence building bridge’ for Members committed to a fully functioning dispute settlement system pending an agreement on dispute settlement reform.
- Barbados, Liechtenstein and Moldova have become the latest Members to join the MPIA.¹³

TRADE-CLIMATE AGENDA

- On 28 March 2026, the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate concluded its third ministerial meeting and adopted a communiqué outlining a set of voluntary actions to guide future cooperation.
- These actions include strengthening dialogue among trade, climate, and finance ministers; engaging WTO bodies on trade-related climate measures; supporting developing countries through technical assistance and capacity-building; promoting sectoral cooperation in areas such as renewable energy and sustainable agriculture; and advancing work on standards and carbon accounting in international trade.

¹¹ World Trade Organization, ‘DG cites MPIA as “practical, confidence-building bridge” amid Appellate Body impasse’ (28 March 2026), available at https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_350_e.htm.

¹² Piyush Goyal, Twitter.

¹³ World Trade Organization, ‘DG cites MPIA as “practical, confidence-building bridge” amid Appellate Body impasse’ (28 March 2026), available

- The coalition, established in 2023 and co-led by Ecuador, the European Union, Kenya, and New Zealand, functions as a platform for ministerial-level coordination among participating countries on trade and climate issues. Its work is focused on dialogue and cooperation rather than binding negotiations or formal outcomes within the WTO system.¹⁴

We hope you have found this information useful. For any queries/clarifications please write to us at insights@elp-in.com or write to our authors:

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at https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_28mar26_350_e.htm.

¹⁴ Trishant Dev, ‘WTO MC14: Trade-climate agenda pushes ahead as ministers adopt communique’, *Down To Earth* (28 March 2026), available at <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/economy/wto-mc14-trade-climate-agenda-pushes-ahead-as-ministers-adopt-communique>.



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