



## WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 14

### 29 March 2026 – DAY 4

#### INTRODUCTION

The fourth and final day of the WTO Ministerial Conference 14 (MC14) convened on 29 March 2026, beginning with an Informal Heads of Delegation meeting at the ministerial level to consolidate positions and prepare for the closing session.

This was followed by the formal closing session of the Conference, where WTO Member States (Members) reflected on the outcomes of the past four days of discussions. At the conclusion of the day, the Chair of MC14 and the Directorate General of the WTO delivered concluding remarks, reflecting on the outcomes of the conference and outlining the future course of discussions and follow-up work to be carried out in Geneva.

*Key updates from Day 4 are summarized below:*

#### WTO REFORM

- The MC14 concluded without consensus on a work plan on reform.<sup>1</sup>
- The United States, Paraguay, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have opposed the Minister-Facilitators' reports on "WTO reform".
- This prompted further revisions to the reform proposals, particularly on issues relating to decision-making by consensus, differentiation among developing countries in the context of special and differential treatment (S&DT), and "level playing field" considerations.

- India emphasized that the WTO reform process should remain Member-driven, open, transparent, and inclusive, and should be conducted under the authority of the General Council.
- India, Oman, and South Africa submitted a draft declaration on WTO reforms, emphasizing S&DT for developing countries and the need to uphold past mandates.<sup>2</sup> They proposed that consultations on dispute settlement reform, under the auspices of the Dispute Settlement Body, should continue following MC14 and should report to the General Council as per the aforementioned indicative timelines and checkpoints.<sup>3</sup> The draft further envisages a midway review ahead of MC15. The first phase of post-MC14 work will include a stocktaking across identified areas to establish a shared factual baseline. The mid-term review will assess whether outputs are balanced across all areas and whether the process has been conducted in accordance with the principles set out.<sup>4</sup>
- During discussions on "level playing field" issues, China emphasized the need to uphold core WTO principles, including most-favoured-nation treatment and the development dimension of the multilateral trading system. China cautioned that measures framed in the name of fairness, including certain trade remedies or trade-related environmental measures, should not undermine development considerations or restrict policy space for developing Members.
- On dispute settlement reform, the African Group reiterated that interim arrangements such as the Multi-

<sup>1</sup> Brett Fortnam, 'MC14 closes without e-commerce moratorium extension, reform plan; both punted to Geneva', Inside trade, available at - [MC14 closes without e-commerce moratorium extension, reform plan; both punted to Geneva](https://www.insidetrade.com/news/mc14-closes-without-e-commerce-moratorium-extension-reform-plan-both-punted-to-geneva) | [InsideTrade.com](https://www.insidetrade.com).

<sup>2</sup> 'Voice of Global South: India bats strongly to shield WTO's core mandates at MC14', Business Line, available at - [Voice of Global South: India bats strongly to shield WTO's core mandates at MC14 - The HinduBusinessLine](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-bats-strongly-to-shield-wto-s-core-mandates-at-mc14-the-voice-of-global-south).

<sup>3</sup> 'India, Oman, South Africa submit work plan on WTO reforms', Economic Times, available at -

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-oman-south-africa-submit-work-plan-on-wto-reforms/articleshow/129881463.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>4</sup> 'India, Oman, South Africa submit work plan on WTO reforms', Economic Times, available at -

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-oman-south-africa-submit-work-plan-on-wto-reforms/articleshow/129881463.cms?from=mdr>.

Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (**MPIA**) cannot serve as a substitute for a fully multilateral solution. The group emphasized that reform efforts should remain inclusive and development-oriented, address capacity constraints faced by developing countries in accessing dispute settlement and focus on restoring confidence in a durable and balanced multilateral system.

### E-COMMERCE MORATORIUM

- The global moratorium on e-commerce duties has officially expired. The lapse occurred after WTO negotiations concluded without reaching an agreement for an extension.
- The expiration follows a deadlock in discussions between the United States and Brazil. The two Members were unable to find common ground on the duration of a potential renewal, with disagreements focusing on whether to maintain the moratorium for more than 2 years.
- India, while maintaining its opposition to a long-term extension, citing revenue loss and policy flexibility concerns,<sup>5</sup> has reportedly shown some flexibility, signaling 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.<sup>6</sup>
- The WTO conference chair, in his closing remarks, informed delegates that the session in Yaoundé had run out of time to resolve the impasse. Consequently, the diplomatic process will now shift to Geneva, where Members are expected to resume negotiations. It was further indicated that discussions in Geneva will effectively restart the negotiating process.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 'WTO Eyes Extension of Global E-Commerce Tariff Ban, India Pushes Back', Outlook Business, available at - <https://www.outlookbusiness.com/economy-and-policy/wto-e-commerce-tariff-ban-extension-india-opposes#:~:text=The%20WTO%20moratorium%20means%20that,on%20whether%20it%20should%20continue.>

<sup>6</sup> 'WTO members try to close gap between US, India on e-commerce tariff moratorium', Economic Times, 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](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)

<sup>7</sup> 'WTO E-commerce Duty Moratorium Expires After Deadlock', IUX24, available at - [WTO E-commerce Duty Moratorium Expires After Deadlock | IUX24.](#)

- United Kingdom described the failure to reach a deal as a "major setback" and urged those opposing progress to recognize the need for compromise.<sup>8</sup>

### INVESTMENT FACILITATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT (IFDA)

- India maintained its opposition to the IFDA, thereby preventing consensus on an agreement endorsed by 128 Members.
- India argued that incorporating the plurilateral deal would bypass the "consensus" rule and set a dangerous precedent for non-mandated issues to eclipse core mandated priorities such as food security.<sup>9</sup>

### FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

- India emphasised that ongoing fisheries subsidies negotiations must prioritise sustainability concerns in line with Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, while firmly embedding principles of equity.
- India highlighted the importance of S&DT for developing countries and least developed countries, along with adherence to principles such as Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities and the Polluter Pays Principle.<sup>10</sup>

### NON-VIOLATION AND SITUATION COMPLAINTS (NVSC) UNDER THE TRIPS AGREEMENT

- Bangladesh sought continuation of the moratorium on non-violation and situation complaints (**NVSC**) under the TRIPS Agreement until the next ministerial conference of the WTO, arguing that it will create flexibility in copyright and patent rules for poorer countries.
- The NVSCs means if any Member violates the rules of the TRIPS, such as patent rights, the Member cannot be

<sup>8</sup> 'WTO reform talks collapse over US-Brazil stand-off', Financial Times, available at - [WTO reform talks collapse over US-Brazil stand-off.](#)

<sup>9</sup> 'Voice of Global South: India bats strongly to shield WTO's core mandates at MC14', Business Line, available at - [Voice of Global South: India bats strongly to shield WTO's core mandates at MC14 - The HinduBusinessLine.](#)

<sup>10</sup> 'Challenge of overcapacity and overfishing arises from heavily subsidised industrial fleets, not from small-scale fishermen in India and other developing countries and LDCs: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal at WTO Ministerial Conference', PIB Press Release, Release ID: 2246689, available at - <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2246689&reg=3&lang=1.>

challenged before the WTO's dispute settlement body.<sup>11</sup>

- However, as noted in the closing remarks by the Chair of MC14, the issue of NVSCs under TRIPS remained unresolved due to time constraints during the conference.<sup>12</sup>

## OUTCOMES OF MC 14

- In terms of outcomes, the Members agreed to continue engaging in negotiations on fisheries subsidies, with a view to making recommendations at the next conference to achieve comprehensive disciplines on fisheries subsidies.
- In addition to this, the Members signaled their intention to build on an emerging "Yaoundé package," which includes draft decisions on WTO reform and a related work plan, electronic commerce, TRIPS-related moratoriums, and a dedicated package for least developed countries. While the progress achieved was notable, Members recognized that further work in Geneva will be essential to finalize these outcomes.<sup>13</sup>
- Ministers also adopted two MC14 decisions that were endorsed earlier by members in Geneva: on improving the integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system; and on enhancing the precise, effective and operational implementation of S&DT provisions in the SPS and TBT Agreements.<sup>14</sup>
- The decision on S&DT implementation, circulated by South Africa on behalf of the G-90, aims to strengthen support for developing and least-developed country Members through enhanced transparency, technical assistance and capacity-building within relevant WTO bodies.<sup>15</sup> The decision on small economies focuses on promoting their integration into global trade and calls for continued monitoring of challenges faced by small and vulnerable economies, including through trade

facilitation, digitalization and the sharing of best practices.<sup>16</sup>

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

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<sup>11</sup> Refayet Ullah Mirdha, 'WTO conference: Dhaka for keeping flexibility on patents, copyrights', The Daily Star, available at - [WTO conference: Dhaka for keeping flexibility on patents, copyrights | The Daily Star](https://www.dailystar.com.bd/news/2026/03/30/wto-conference-dhaka-for-keeping-flexibility-on-patents-copyrights).

<sup>12</sup> 'MC14 concludes with adopted decisions, progress on key outstanding issues', WTO News, available at - [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news26\\_e/mc14\\_30mar26\\_354\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_30mar26_354_e.htm).

<sup>13</sup> 'MC14 concludes with adopted decisions, progress on key outstanding issues', WTO News, available at - [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news26\\_e/mc14\\_30mar26\\_354\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news26_e/mc14_30mar26_354_e.htm).

<sup>14</sup> World Trade Organization, 'MC14 concludes with adopted decisions, progress on key outstanding issues' (30 March 2026), available at - [WTO | 2026 News items - MC14 concludes with adopted decisions, progress on key outstanding issues](https://www.wto.org/news/2026/03/30/mc14-concludes-with-adopted-decisions-progress-on-key-outstanding-issues).

<sup>15</sup> Ministerial Decision on enhancing the precise, effective and operational implementation of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions under the Agreements on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and the agreement on technical barriers to trade (TBT), WT/MIN(26)/W/13.

<sup>16</sup> Draft Ministerial Decision on the Work Programme on Small Economies, WT/MIN(26)/W/9, available at - [file.html](#).



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