

## WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 13 – 29th February 2024 – ROUND UP

### MC13 extended by a day since deadlock on key issues continues

- The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC), originally scheduled to conclude on February 29, has been extended by a day. Developing and developed nations have struggled to reach consensus on key issues, leading to the extension.<sup>1</sup>
- According to an official, efforts are ongoing to resolve the impasse, but progress has been limited thus far.<sup>2</sup>

### LDCs are reportedly frustrated with India and South Africa's blocking tactics

- India and South Africa's block of the plurilateral Investment Facilitation for Development deal has caused frustration among many least developed countries-members, leading to tensions spilling over into other negotiations, according to officials.<sup>3</sup>
- LDCs are also unhappy with India and South Africa after they opposed the LDCs' request to extend the interim public stockholding deal to LDCs.<sup>4</sup>

### Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Africa, Argentina and 68 other countries ask for curb on unilateral trade-related environmental measures imposed by the developed countries

- A group of 72 countries, including Bangladesh, South Africa, Argentina and Indonesia, have released a Ministerial Declaration on the contribution of the multilateral trading system to tackle environmental challenges.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thehindu.com/business/wtos-5th-day-meet-talks-on-to-break-impasse-over-agri-fisheries-issues/article67902759.ece#:~:text=The%2013h%20ministerial%20conference%20\(MC,moved%20much%2C%20an%20official%20s%20aid.](https://www.thehindu.com/business/wtos-5th-day-meet-talks-on-to-break-impasse-over-agri-fisheries-issues/article67902759.ece#:~:text=The%2013h%20ministerial%20conference%20(MC,moved%20much%2C%20an%20official%20s%20aid.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

- This communication has called for usage of WTO forums to include environment in trade agenda instead of unilateral trade-related environmental measures.

### Civil Society Organisations claim unfair censorship at WTO MC13

- Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS) Global Network, representing various small farmer and fisherfolk unions across countries, expressed concern over the removal of civil society's rights to freedom of speech and political expression at the WTO's summit in Abu Dhabi.
- Previous WTO Ministerials had allowed civil society participants to engage freely, including distributing information and analyses, taking photos, and displaying banners. However, at the Abu Dhabi summit, a farmer leader from India, K V Biju, was frisked and held for close to two hours after sharing a letter with a journalist, despite being an accredited NGO representative.<sup>6</sup>
- The incident was highlighted as an unprecedented and unannounced restriction on civil society's participation in what was supposed to be the WTO's most "open, transparent, and inclusive process" ever.<sup>7</sup>

### Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India propose revamping cross-border payments system; EU and US attempted to blocked this proposal

- Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have backed India's proposal to initiate a work programme at the WTO MC13 for cheaper, faster and more

<sup>3</sup> <https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/reporters-notebook-storm-calm-mc13>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/MIN24/28.pdf&Open=True>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

accessible cross-border payments including remittances.<sup>8</sup>

- This is significant because the global average cost for digital remittances, at 4.84%, is notably lower than that for non-digital remittances. Additionally, out of the total remittances of \$860 billion in 2023, approximately 78%, or \$669 billion, went to low- and middle-income countries.<sup>9</sup>

#### India's Commerce Minister says India will not accept any sustainability commitments in the proposed EU-India FTA

- On the sidelines of MC13, Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has reportedly said to Financial Times that India in no case will accept sustainability commitments in the proposed trade deal with the European Union.<sup>10</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:

**Sanjay Notani, Partner – Email –** [sanjaynotani@elp-in.com](mailto:sanjaynotani@elp-in.com)

**Ambarish Sathianathan, Partner – Email –** [AmbarishSathianathan@elp-in.com](mailto:AmbarishSathianathan@elp-in.com)

**Shweta Kushe, Associate, Email –** [shwetakushe@elp-in.com](mailto:shwetakushe@elp-in.com)



<sup>8</sup><https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/bangladesh-nepal-lanka-back-india-call-to-reduce-cost-of-remittances/articleshow/108117646.cms>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/51dc962a-6cc0-49ad-b941-0e0942216d63>