

14th WTO Ministerial Conference



14th WTO Ministerial Conference
Yaoundé - Cameroon
2026



GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE
CENTRE FOR TRADE AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION
gtp. Geneva Trade Platform

MC14 Reactions

Outcomes, Reflections & Reactions

Policy Brief

April, 2026





Table of Contents

Introduction 03

MC14 Chairperson's Summary 04

Statement by Director-General Ngozi 07

Select Reflections 09

- [WTO MC14 Outcomes: Small wins, progress on reform, and digital trade as deal-breaker](#)
- [What MC14 Reveals About the Future of the WTO](#)
- [WTO reform after Yaoundé: What next for the multilateral trade order?](#)
- [Another Fish Story From the WTO](#)
- [Carney, multilateralism champion, must help save the World Trade Organization](#)
- [A World Trade Organization is irrelevant when no one follows its rules](#)
- [The case for trade, remade](#)
- [Was the WTO Ministerial Meeting at Yaoundé a complete failure?](#)
- [MC14 lays bare the WTO's many problems](#)
- [The WTO Isn't Dead, but America Is Breaking It](#)
- [The World Trade Organization is flailing](#)
- [Empty net of World Trade Organization MC14](#)
- [WTO Ministerial Failure Masks Weaponisation Dangers](#)
- [EU policy on the World Trade Organization in the wake of the March Ministerial](#)

Introduction

Ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, we published an overview of the major issues up for discussion through the lens of geopolitics, development and the business community.

With the Ministerial Conference now behind us, many experts, policymakers and thought leaders have shared their reflections on the deliberations, what the outcomes mean, and what may happen next.

We have gathered a range of these in the links below in an effort to provide a broad range of perspectives on the Ministerial Conference and its implications. The list below is not exhaustive and there are many other perspectives that can and should be heeded, but we hope we have provided a comprehensive set of resources from a diverse set of voices.

Note: The brief summaries offered below are our own, and not those of the authors. We recommend reading the pieces in their entirety.





FOURTEENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE MC14 CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY

1.1. Let me begin with my **summary, under my own responsibility as MC14 Chairperson**, of the main points which have emerged from the discussions during this Conference. The summary is not exhaustive, but I hope it captures our discussions over the past four days.

1.2. We started the Conference on a high note as we celebrated the Entry into Force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and welcomed three new deposits of instruments of acceptance from Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Samoa. Let me also congratulate Members for adopting the three decisions: the Ministerial Decision on the Work Programme on Small Economies¹, the Ministerial Decision on Enhancing the Precise, Effective and Operational Implementation of Special and Differential Treatment Provisions of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)², and the Ministerial Decision on Fisheries Subsidies.³

1.3. On the **Electronic Commerce Work Programme and Moratorium**, we have the draft text of the Facilitator – Honourable Senator Kamina Johnson Smith – which has been circulated and is annexed to this statement. As you know, this moratorium is set to expire at this Ministerial Conference or by 31 March 2026, whichever is earlier. Ministers worked tirelessly with the assistance of the Facilitator to extend the moratorium and work programme and came very close to achieving an agreement. Unfortunately, we ran out of time. I have detected a strong desire by Members to work towards this objective. As MC14 Chairperson, I am recommending that the good progress and momentum that was generated at this Conference be continued in Geneva with a view to arriving at a decision by the next General Council meeting.

1.4. Ministers also actively engaged in the **WTO Reform** Breakout Sessions on Foundational Issues of the WTO including its principles, Decision-making, Past Mandates, Development and Level Playing Field Issues. Our reform deliberations also reflected a new way of working. We are evolving on how we engage with one another. Not only was the format of the sessions "reform in and of itself" – but Ministers were true to the Reform Ministerial that this Conference was dubbed. The breakout sessions encouraged open, genuine dialogue, and the sense of urgency around reform was unmistakable throughout our discussions.

1.5. As a result of our efforts, a **revised Declaration and Work Plan on WTO Reform** emerged which was circulated and is annexed to this statement. At this pivotal moment for the multilateral trading system, this is historic. Ministers affirmed a shared purpose and provided clear timebound direction towards meaningful and necessary reform. We affirmed the need for WTO Reform. Given the importance of this matter, as MC14 Chairperson, I recommend that Members continue their work on WTO Reform work with a sense of purpose and urgency with a view to adopting the draft declaration and work plan by the General Council meeting in May 2026. Advancing substantive, comprehensive, and strategic WTO reform that can strengthen credibility and effectiveness, deliver tangible results, and keep the WTO resilient and responsive to the needs of people across the globe.

¹WT/MIN(26)/36 – WT/L/1235.

²WT/MIN(26)/37 – WT/L/1236.

³WT/MIN(26)/38 – WT/L/1237.



1.6. Ministers heard an update from the DSB Chairperson on **Dispute Settlement Reform**. The DSB Chairperson's update reflected dispute settlement reform as a priority and recognized that advancing this work after the Conference – when conditions are ripe and all are ready to engage.

1.7. There was also a rich discussion on the **Moratorium on TRIPS Non-Violation and Situation Complaints**⁴ – which also expires at this Conference – and the **LDC Specific Package**⁵, the **G-90 Agreement-Specific Proposals on Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement**⁶, **transfer of technology**⁷, **cost of remittances**⁸, and **emerging agricultural trade issues**.⁹ I would encourage Members to continue these discussions after this Conference with a view to addressing these important issues.

1.8. Let me commend Ministers for adopting the Ministerial Decision on Fisheries Subsidies. **Agriculture and fisheries subsidies** remain critically important priority areas for all Members – as a backbone of many economies and essential to food security, livelihoods, jobs, poverty reduction and sustainability. Notwithstanding the divergences in Members' positions, I was encouraged by Ministers' firm resolve to redouble efforts to bridge gaps and resume the negotiations taking into account the work undertaken thus far by Members, including during this Ministerial Conference.

1.9. The promise of the **Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA)** to assist its signatories attract the foreign direct investment to drive growth, productivity gains, job creation, and integration into global supply chains was underscored by many Ministers. While incorporation of the IFDA has yet to transpire, MC14 provided the platform for Ministers to move this objective closer to fulfilment.

1.10. Apart from the MC14 Sessions, we also launched a new chapter of solidarity and impact with the **Enhanced Integrated Framework Phase Three**. This is a six-year renewal of our shared promise to help least-developed countries turn trade and investment into inclusive, resilient and sustainable development. Backed by fresh contributions from Germany, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, this is a tangible vote of confidence in multilateral cooperation and a clear signal that we intend to leave no LDC behind as we translate opportunity into outcomes on the ground.

1.11. As part of a new way of working, 66 WTO Members – representing around 70% of global trade – have agreed on a pragmatic pathway to bring the **Agreement on Electronic Commerce** into effect through interim arrangements while work continues toward full incorporation into the WTO legal framework. This is about certainty for businesses and consumers, about trust in the multilateral system, and about ensuring that the benefits of the digital marketplace are accessible, predictable and inclusive for all.

1.12. We launched a new phase under the **Partenariat pour le Coton (PPC) initiative**, with a focus on mobilizing investment to accelerate the transformation of the cotton-to-textile-and-garment value chain. The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and other partners

⁴WT/MIN(26)/W/10 and WT/MIN(26)/W/24 – IP/C/W/733.

⁵WT/MIN(26)/W/7 and WT/MIN(26)/W/20.

⁶WT/MIN(26)/W/21.

⁷WT/MIN(26)/W/2 – WT/WGTTT/W/42/Rev.1 – WT/COMTD/W/305/Rev.1 – IP/C/W/729/Rev.1.

⁸WT/MIN(26)/W/3/Rev.1.

⁹WT/MIN(26)/W/6/Rev.3.



told the assembled Ministers that African cotton will be an engine of growth, with the bank providing the investment power. And we are happy that the President of the Afreximbank graced the occasion and also delivered an electrifying speech at the Opening Session of the Ministerial Conference.

1.13. There was a high-level event on **women and trade** featuring the work of the Women Exporters in the Digital Economy (WEIDE) Fund, the WTO informal working groups on trade and gender and on small enterprises, and the International Trade Centre's She Trades Initiative.

1.14. And we **brought continents closer together**. A high-level dialogue strengthened the bridge between Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, affirming the power of diversified South-South trade to unlock new engines of growth, and setting in motion plans for regular summits linking Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean – an enduring platform to deepen cooperation, expand opportunities and turn dialogue into durable partnerships. 1.15. Honourable Ministers, it has been a pleasure to host you in Yaoundé for the Fourteenth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference.

1.16. Cameroon has been proud to have welcomed you to the second Ministerial Conference in Africa. As our continent continues to deepen its engagement in international trade, we are committed to working for a future that can deliver for our citizens and businesses, along with those of all WTO Members.

1.17. Your presence here, in the midst of circumstances that could have easily disrupted travel plans, speaks volumes about your commitment to the work of this organization. Against all odds, you made every effort to be here, and that dedication does not go unnoticed. What we have accomplished to reach this point is remarkable – and I sincerely thank you for it. Nearly 80 Ministers, representing all continents, joined this Ministerial – from the United States to Samoa, from Brazil to New Zealand, along with many Members from the Gulf, all arriving despite the challenges. I see this as a powerful reaffirmation of your confidence in the trading system and in the WTO.

1.18. Together, we demonstrated unity in setting a clear and forward-looking direction for the reform of this organization. The skill, the intensity, and the energy in the room were absolutely electric. While arriving at agreement on several priority issues will require further work, we depart with clearer pathways, renewed trust, and practical avenues of cooperation across multiple areas – evidence that the WTO is very much alive and capable of improving lives and livelihoods of all our citizens.

1.19. Excellencies, against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions, cascading crises, and a turbulent global trade landscape, your presence in Yaoundé fills my heart with hope. Let us carry the sense of solidarity, same urgency and resolve you have all shown in Yaoundé back to Geneva and into our capitals, turning momentum into decisions that make the WTO more effective, resilient, responsive, and focused on delivering for people. If we sustain this spirit of Cameroon marked by collective problem-solving, the WTO will remain the forum where differences are bridged, opportunities are unlocked, and a more prosperous, inclusive future is made real.

1.20. This concludes my Summary as Chairperson of the 14th Ministerial Conference.



Statement by Director- General Ngozi

Delivered at the Informal Heads of Delegation Meeting on 29 March

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I want to express my profound gratitude to our MC14 Chair, Minister Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute, and to the government and people of Cameroon for the hospitality and support we've all enjoyed.

Now turning to our business at this meeting. We were supposed to finish at 1pm today, and it is now almost midnight. It's been a long, hard day and I am deeply grateful to all of you for the patience you have shown today, as we tried to bridge a handful of remaining differences on some of the key files before us. I have to apologize to the many ministers who had to leave when they would have liked to be here at the closing.

However, we have run out of time. Some have already caught flights, and some have changed flights, and some will need to go soon.

In short, we are very close to a Yaoundé package of agreements that would be important for Members and the future of the organization. We've worked really hard here, and we are very close, but we're not all the way there yet.

I am hearing from several of you that it would be regrettable to lose so much effort and work, with the finish line in our sights, and that you still think we can get the job done.

I have spoken with the MC14 Chair, the Vice-Chairpersons, and the Minister-Facilitators responsible for the areas covered here. In the circumstances, if we decide to move the work to Geneva, we believe that it would be appropriate to preserve the important texts we have developed here, and use them as a basis to finalize agreements in Geneva at the next General Council meeting.



For clarity, let me list the emerging Yaoundé package that we would be bringing back with us:

- The draft Yaoundé Ministerial Declaration on WTO Reform and Work Plan that was circulated to you this morning;
- The draft Ministerial Decision on Electronic Commerce that, as you know, is still missing some important numbers;
- The draft Ministerial Decision on the Moratorium on TRIPS NonViolation and Situation Complaints;
- The draft Ministerial Decision on Fisheries Subsidies;
- The LDC package.

As you can see, finalizing this package would amount to a considerable achievement. We shouldn't leave it on the table.

I want to note that the two moratoria and the e-commerce work programme will expire at the end of this month. The Minister-Facilitators' reports from Yaoundé will be available to us to inform our efforts in Geneva.

Two remaining elements that you already approved in Geneva are ready to be adopted here:

- The Ministerial Decision on the Work Programme on Small Economies;
- The Ministerial Decision on Enhancing the precise, effective; and operational implementation of S&DT in the Application of the SPS and TBT Agreements.

Excellencies, it has been a constructive four days – and nights. I thank you all for your solutions-oriented engagement. We accomplished a lot. We have come a long way. All we need is time. And we can give ourselves that between now and the next General Council. Thank you, and thanks again to our wonderful hosts

Select Reflections

These are op-eds, opinion pieces and analytical papers produced by a range of prominent experts and institutions from around the world.

The views therein are entirely those of the authors and not those of GTP.



World Trade Organization 14th Ministerial Conference Outcomes: Small wins, progress on reform, and digital trade as deal-breaker

By: Alice Tipping, Tristan Irschlinger, Rashmi Jose and Nathalie Bernasconi-Osterwalder

Published in: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)



Summary: MC14 produced only limited outcomes (e.g., keeping fisheries-subsidies talks moving and certain steps affecting developing-country treatment in standards-related rules), while failing to deliver a broader ministerial package. The broader breakdown occurred due to unresolved disagreements on digital trade policy, which blocked consensus on the meeting's "big-ticket" items.



What MC14 Reveals About the Future of the WTO

By: Iman Pambagyo
Fmr. Indonesian Trade Ministry Director General of International Trade Negotiations and Amb. to the WTO

Published in: Jakarta Globe

Summary: Argues the WTO is not collapsing but is entering a new era where plurilateral initiatives and regional agreements will increasingly shape global trade governance as consensus becomes harder. Emphasizes that developing-country priorities and the digital trade divide will be decisive, making incremental reform and political will essential to preserve predictability and non-discrimination.





WTO reform after Yaoundé: What next for the multilateral trade order?

By: Anton Spisak
Senior Research Fellow at CER

Published in: Center for European Reform (CER)

Summary: Argues that while the failure of the WTO's 'reform ministerial' deepens the strain on the global trade system, it also points to a possible path for future co-operation among coalitions of the willing.



Another Fish Story From the WTO

By: Amb. Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative



Published in: Office of the United States Trade Representative

Summary: Argues the WTO has become an ineffective forum that undermines U.S. interests through low ministerial engagement and persistent failures on imbalances, barriers, and discipline. Concludes the consensus model makes meaningful reform unlikely and says the U.S. will pursue reciprocal outcomes regionally/bilaterally and, if needed, unilaterally rather than wait on Geneva processes.



Carney, multilateralism champion, must help save the World Trade Organization

By: Robert Wolfe and Peter Ungphakorn
Professor Emeritus in the School of Policy Studies of Queen's University and WTO Secretariat (Ret.)

Published in: The Globe and Mail

Summary: Argues the WTO is a valuable public good that ministers should "keep afloat" by defending core disciplines (notably non-discrimination) even when major powers won't agree on big reforms. Suggests middle-power coalition building can help maintain a rules-based core while consensus is blocked, and suggests that such a coalition would align with the principles laid out by Canada's Prime Minister in a widely covered speech at WEF Davos.





A World Trade Organization is irrelevant when no one follows its rules

By: The Washington Post Editorial Board

Published in: The Washington Post

Summary: The editorial argues the WTO's credibility collapses when major members openly disregard rules, framing a U.S.–Brazil dispute as a symptom of broader vulnerability. Warns that rising protectionism and unilateralism among major economies risk making the WTO increasingly irrelevant for governing global trade.



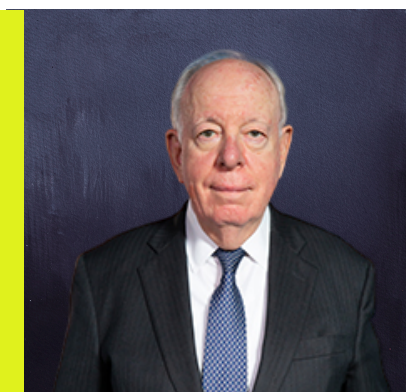
The case for trade, remade

By: Andy Haldane
Contributing Editor and Columnist, Financial Times

Published in: The Financial Times



Summary: Argues that despite a “disastrous decade” for global trade culminating in WTO paralysis, globalisation is not collapsing but transitioning from efficiency-driven to resilience-driven models. Adaptive supply chains, policy learning from past crises, and the economic necessity of trade will sustain and potentially revitalise the global trading system rather than trigger a 1930s-style retreat.



Was the WTO Ministerial Meeting at Yaoundé a complete failure?

By: Alan Wolff
Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE)

Published in: The Globe and Mail

Summary: Argues MC14 failed on headline measures but the trading system still moved forward because 66 members advanced a legally binding e-commerce agreement for signature. Believes this is evidence that plurilateral progress inside the WTO “ecosystem” can still happen, while emphasizing that consensus and enforcement deadlocks remain the central institutional constraint.





MC14 lays bare the WTO's many problems

By: Keith M. Rockwell
Senior Research Fellow, the Hinrich Foundation

Published in: The Hinrich Foundation

Summary: Argues that MC14 failed due to obstruction by key players, leading to the collapse of deals and expiry of the e-commerce moratorium. Countries are now bypassing the WTO with interim and plurilateral agreements as a more viable path forward.



The WTO Isn't Dead, but America Is Breaking It

By: Clark Packard and Scott Lincicome
Trade policy Fellow and Vice President for Economics and Trade, at the Cato Institute

Published in: The Wall Street Journal



Summary: Argues that while US criticism of the WTO is valid, and that it does need reform, but that such reform cannot happen until the US accepts its responsibility for "crippling" the institution.



The World Trade Organization is flailing

By: Prabhash Ranjan
Assistant Professor at South Asian University, New Delhi

Published in: The Hindu

Summary: Argues MC14 failed to send a reassuring signal for trade multilateralism, with deadlock on key issues reflecting deeper institutional fragility. Links this failure to an acceleration of trade rulemaking outside the WTO framework which increases uncertainty for the multilateral system.





Empty net of World Trade Organization MC14

By: Shaheen Ali

Former Permanent Secretary for Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications of Fiji

Published in: The Fiji Times

Summary: Argues that despite participation by Pacific delegations, MC14 produced no binding “catch”: fisheries and agriculture progress stalled and the e-commerce moratorium extension failure fractured the broader package. Warns that bypassing consensus multilateralism in favor of plurilateral/bilateral tracks reduces small states’ influence and raises vulnerabilities for economies like Fiji.



WTO Ministerial Failure Masks Weaponisation Dangers

By: David Henig

Director of the UK Trade Policy Project at ECIPE

Published in: ECIPE



Summary: Argues the ministerial’s failure reflects a wider reality of “weaponised” economic policy: members talk about supporting digital trade while simultaneously tightening domestic restrictions and pursuing protectionist industrial goals. Suggests the widening gulf between WTO negotiations and real-world actions is what makes outcomes “abject,” and expects trade to continue even as WTO rulemaking lags behind.



EU policy on the World Trade Organization in the wake of the March Ministerial

By: Ignacio García Bercero

Bruegel Senior Fellow

Published in: Bruegel

Summary: Argues that even without a multilateral breakthrough, the EU should work with like-minded partners on agreements and shared trade rules to keep the WTO relevant. He frames EU strategy as persevering with coalition-based progress when comprehensive consensus outcomes are not achievable.





MC14 Reactions: Outcomes, Reactions & Reflections

About Geneva Trade Platform (GTP)

We are an independent, non-partisan platform dedicated to supporting the inclusivity and effectiveness of the trade policy conversation in Geneva, and around the world.

Housed within the Geneva Graduate Institute's Centre for Trade and Economic Integration, we operate with a small secretariat to bring the resources and convening power of the Institute together with donor funds to address challenges to the international trade policy conversation.

You can find more information about the Geneva Trade Platform and how to collaborate with us on our [website](#).

Authors

Dmitry Grozoubski, Executive Director, Geneva Trade Platform

Acknowledgments

The Geneva Trade Platform would like to express our gratitude to all those who worked with us on putting the list above together, to the authors who took their time to share their thoughts, and to the publications who published them.

Graphic Design

Joanita Kalibala, Events and Communications Manager, Geneva Trade Platform

Photo Credits

©WTO: Cover page and p.3, p.7
Pexels/@Kelly : p.4-6
Getty Images Signature/Yuri Arcurs: p.15

Disclaimer

The elements presented in this policy brief do not necessarily reflect the views of GTP or of any of the partner organizations of GTP, including the Geneva Graduate Institute, or of GTP's funders.



This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License.



GENEVA
GRADUATE
INSTITUTE

CENTRE FOR
TRADE AND
ECONOMIC
INTEGRATION



Geneva Trade
Platform

Let's Work Together



Contact Us

Email

info@genevatradeplatform.org

Website

genevatradeplatform.org

Socials

