

12 March 2026

WTO MC14: A turning point for multilateralism and digital trade

Executive summary

The 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, taking place from 26 to 29 March 2026, comes at a crucial moment. It is critical that Members demonstrate their collective commitment to maintaining, strengthening and further improving the rules-based trading system.

We remain a strong supporter of a robust multilateral framework for digital trade and our continued advocacy leading up to MC12 and MC13.

Securing the Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions

We call on WTO members to agree on a long-lasting and stable solution to the Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions with a view towards making it permanent. For nearly three decades, WTO members have guaranteed trade policy certainty and sustained flow of digital trade by consistently renewing the Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions.

Allowing the Moratorium to lapse without renewal or a permanent adoption would represent a dangerous setback and would disrupt critical global supply chains. We therefore call on all WTO Member States to make every effort to agree on a long-lasting and stable Moratorium. Failure to do so would:

- ▶ Impose higher economic costs on all participating members, particularly on those with less developed digital infrastructures, outweighing any limited fiscal gains from customs duties and reducing the availability of digital goods and services worldwide¹;
- ▶ Disrupt manufacturing operations and innovation cycles in industries that rely on the cross-border flow of data, such as for semiconductors;
- ▶ Significantly increase operational and compliance costs for businesses, adding unnecessary economic strain and disproportionately affect SMEs, who rely on the Moratorium for access to digital tools;
- ▶ Undermine global efforts to reduce the “Digital Divide”, reversing hard-won progress.

In the framework of their respective trade agreements, the EU, the US and Japan reaffirmed the importance of the Moratorium and their shared commitment to pursue its permanent adoption. We call on all WTO members to build on this momentum and seize the opportunity at MC14 to find a long lasting and stable agreement on the Moratorium.

¹ A wealth of research proves the economic benefits of the Moratorium, e.g.: Tibor Hanappi, Adam Jakubik, Michele Ruta, “Fiscal Revenue Mobilization and Digitally Trade Products: Taxing at the Border or Behind It?,” *International Monetary Fund* (September 2023), <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/IMF-Notes/Issues/2023/09/07/Fiscal-Revenue-Mobilization-and-Digitally-Traded-Products-Taxing-at-the-Border-or-Behind-It-538487>