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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Conclusions at the start of the 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

Delegations will find in Annex the Council conclusions at the start of the 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, as adopted by the Council on 26 March 2026.

Conclusions at the start of the 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

1. The European Union is committed to an open, fair, and rules-based multilateral trading system with a modernised WTO at its core. The EU supports a meaningful package of outcomes for the 14th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC14), and calls on all WTO Members to contribute constructively, in accordance with their needs and capacities. In an increasingly fragmented economic order, the stability and predictability of a rules-based multilateral trading system are needed more than ever.
2. The Council underlines the importance of MC14 in a context where the WTO is at a critical juncture and, without deep and comprehensive reform, risk of diminished relevance, further eroding the rules-based global trading system. Therefore, MC14 needs to deliver as a ‘reform Ministerial’ and a stepping stone towards a fundamental reform process in the period between MC14 and MC15.
3. The Council is committed to a process of WTO reform centred on three pillars: predictability, fairness, and flexibility, so that the organisation can continue to deliver effectively on its objectives and respond to today’s pressing global trade challenges related in particular to industrial policies, digital trade, climate, biodiversity, and resilience. In view of this, one of the EU's priorities is to tackle the trade tensions that have emerged over the last few years, notably due to non-market practices and policies, focusing on industrial sectors and level playing field issues.
4. The reformed system also needs to reflect the changed economic realities, address imbalances in the rights and commitments of Members, ensure a level playing field, and offer a more flexible framework of rules, including variable-geometry approaches underpinned by a revised governance structure.

5. Hence, the Council supports the establishment of a structured post-MC14 work programme on WTO reform, under the authority of the General Council, and calls for regular reporting and concrete milestones to maintain momentum in the run-up to MC15.
6. A fully functioning and efficient dispute settlement system that is accessible to all Members remains a priority. The Council underscores the importance of ensuring that the WTO rules remain enforceable through established procedures rather than unilateral actions. The EU stands ready to pick up this work and build on the progress already made, whenever the conditions are ripe. However, despite the substantial work done in dispute settlement reform discussions since MC12, the system is not functioning fully. Against this backdrop, the Council recalls that the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) is more important than ever as a stop-gap solution to preserve a fully-functioning dispute settlement system among willing Members.
7. It also supports a work programme that would look into possible new ways of working to allow the organisation to be effective in the context of the 21st century, including the question of consensus, and the timely incorporation of plurilateral agreements into the WTO, notably on e-commerce, investment facilitation for development and in the area of trade and the environment. In this context, the Council underlines the importance of the incorporation of the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development into the WTO legal framework, given its broad membership and development benefits. It also notes the importance of digital trade and the objective of establishing modern trade rules in this area. The Council supports progress towards the implementation as soon as possible of the Agreement on Electronic Commerce on a plurilateral or multilateral basis, including through its application on an interim basis. The Council also looks forward to the extension, preferably on a permanent basis, of the multilateral moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, and sees the e-commerce Work Programme as a valuable framework. Should a new Committee be established to carry on the tasks of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, the Union should maintain a link between the Committee and the continuation, including as regards time duration, of the multilateral moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, unless it would prevent the EU from joining an agreed outcome built on consensus.

8. In the area of agriculture, the Council supports balanced outcomes to advance negotiations concerning all agricultural issues. This could include pursuing further transparency on export restrictions as well as a solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes, as part of a broader outcome on agriculture. Outcomes must be compatible with the Common Agricultural Policy and with the EU's past and present efforts to adopt non-trade-distorting, environmentally friendly measures, and must safeguard the economic sustainability of EU farms.
9. Concerning the work on food security and emergency response, the Council recalls that WTO action remains necessary to respond to current food security challenges, including in light of the consequences of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. The Russian aggression, supported by Belarus, deliberately violates the UN Charter, disregards the rules-based international order, and undermines international security and stability.
10. The Council reiterates the importance of development in the WTO agenda. It underlines that the rules-based multilateral trading system supports sustainable development and the progressive integration of developing countries into global trade. The Council supports efforts to address the concerns of least-developed countries (LDCs), including in relation to proposals on support measures for a smoother transition for WTO Members graduating from the LDC category, and recalls the importance of targeted and needs-based approaches.
11. The Council welcomes the entry into force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies on 15 September 2025 and underlines that WTO Members should strive to reach an agreement on additional provisions to achieve comprehensive disciplines. The Council supports the EU's engagement towards an outcome that is consistent with EU policies and that preserves appropriate support measures while ensuring a level playing field and maintaining sustainability at its core.

12. The Council approves the draft Declarations and Statements on:

- *Statement supporting the Rules-Based Multilateral Trading System: the Role of the MPIA (ST 7643/26)*
- *Declaration on an Interim arrangement for the Agreement on Electronic Commerce (ST 7739/26)*
- *Fossil fuel subsidies reform (FFSR) initiative Ministerial Statement (ST 7644/26)*
- *Communiqué for adoption at the third meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate (ST 7645/26)*
- *Ministerial Decision on the Work Programme on Small Economies (WT/MIN(26)/W/9)*
- *EU-CPTPP Joint Declaration of 27 March 2026 in support of the WTO (ST 7710/26)*

13. The Council supports the Commission in its efforts to make MC14 a success and looks forward to good coordination between Member States and the Commission in this regard. The Council will assess the progress made with a view to reaching a balanced outcome in line with the conditions set out above. To this end, the Council looks forward to the Commission's proposals in relation to the texts of the draft Declarations and Statements discussed within the WTO.
