



TEXTS ADOPTED

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Multilateral negotiations in view of the WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, 26 to 29 March 2026

European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2026 on multilateral negotiations in view of the WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, 26 to 29 March 2026 (2025/2875(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Marrakesh Agreement of 15 April 1994 establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO),
- having regard to the Ministerial Declaration adopted on 14 November 2001 at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the WTO, in particular its resolutions of 8 February 2024 on multilateral negotiations in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi¹, of 25 November 2021 on multilateral negotiations in view of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva², of 29 November 2018 entitled 'WTO: the way forward'³ and of 28 November 2019 on the crisis of the WTO Appellate Body⁴,
- having regard to the outcome documents adopted by consensus at the annual sessions of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, on 25 February 2024 in Abu Dhabi, 7 December 2018 in Geneva and 10 December 2017 in Buenos Aires,
- having regard to the outcomes of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) held in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, which included the adoption of the Abu Dhabi Ministerial Declaration, which links trade to the UN 2030 Agenda, and the accession of Comoros and Timor-Leste to the WTO, but did not include

¹ OJ C, C/2024/6342, 7.11.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6342/oj>.

² OJ C 224, 8.6.2022, p. 89.

³ OJ C 363, 28.10.2020, p. 113.

⁴ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 62.

agreements on key areas such as fisheries subsidies, agriculture and dispute settlement reform,

- having regard to the entry into force on 15 September 2025 of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which commits members to curbing billions of dollars in annual spending on the most harmful subsidies that contribute to the depletion of marine fish stocks,
 - having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
 - having regard to the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in effect since November 2016,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 18 February 2021 entitled 'Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy' and to its annex entitled 'Reforming the WTO: Towards a sustainable and effective multilateral trading system' (COM(2021)0066),
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on International Trade,
- A. whereas the WTO was created to further the liberalisation of trade in goods and services, strengthen multilateralism and foster a fair, open, inclusive, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, in order to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, provide opportunities for employment, growth and prosperity, and improve the welfare of people around the world; whereas the overall objective of the EU's trade policy is to contribute to the harmonious development of world trade, the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade and on foreign direct investment, and the lowering of customs barriers and other barriers; whereas the primary mandate of the WTO is to ensure market access, predictability and legal certainty in international trade and it should not evolve into a general policy forum beyond its core trade functions; whereas trade is vital and a key instrument for supporting and complementing efforts to advance sustainable growth and improve standards of living, ensuring full and better-quality employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income in accordance with the objective of sustainable development;
- B. whereas the multilateral trading system is facing serious political and institutional challenges; whereas these challenges stem not only from institutional shortcomings, but also from the proliferation of unilateral and protectionist measures, including export restrictions, discriminatory subsidies and unfair trade practices, which undermine trust, fragment global value chains and harm the world economy and prosperity; whereas the current turmoil in global trade

is creating enormous uncertainty and economic costs across the globe, which demonstrates clearly that predictable, stable and fair rules are vital for trade to thrive;

- C. whereas the multilateral trade system remains very much alive and active, with 72 % of global trade today still conducted under rules relating to most-favoured nation (MFN) status; whereas this demonstrates that the WTO continues to provide a vital framework of predictability and stability for global trade, and that safeguarding its core principles and disciplines remains crucial;
- D. whereas cooperation and engagement with developing countries is vital to maintaining the multilateral rules-based order; whereas such cooperation should be based on mutual respect and a genuine commitment to fostering international cooperation;
- E. whereas the global trade landscape has been transformed over the past 30 years, including through the economic advancement of key G20 countries and changes to their relative weight in global trade, and through increased and diverse WTO membership; whereas the WTO has struggled to capture the new economic and trade reality and hence has been unable to deliver an ambitious agenda, owing to its broad membership and variety of interests; whereas serious strain is being placed on the global trading system, stemming from the rising protectionism of US trade policies, but also from China's non-market policies and practices, which are creating overcapacity and market distortions in the system;
- F. whereas the WTO is a unique multilateral organisation in the sense that each member participates on an equal footing, it creates and governs binding rules of trade between its members and is underpinned by a legally binding dispute settlement system; whereas a well-functioning, rules-based multilateral trading system is essential for safeguarding the competitiveness of the European economy, strengthening supply chain resilience and supporting the EU's strategic resilience in general;
- G. whereas the current WTO subsidy rules have not been adapted to changing circumstances in global trade; whereas the outdated rules have not been able to constrain distortive state interventions; whereas fair competition and the limiting of spillovers from industrial policies are crucial preconditions for achieving the industrialisation objectives of developing countries;
- H. whereas the WTO needs to be adapted to these new realities and modernised to be fit for the 21st century and to address new challenges related to the green and digital transitions;

- I. whereas a 2025 UN Trade and Development report⁵ demonstrated that, contrary to the arguments of opponents of the e-commerce moratorium, revenue from digital taxation would be limited and risk undermining competitiveness and trade;
- J. whereas the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which was agreed at the 12th Ministerial Conference and entered into force in September 2025, is the first ever multilateral trade agreement with environmental sustainability at its core and establishes a binding set of global rules to help curb an estimated USD 22 billion per year in harmful subsidies provided by governments to the fishing sector, as mandated under SDG target 14,6;
- K. whereas food security remains a challenge, as 258 million people were classified as being in crisis or in more severe phases of acute food insecurity in 2022, up from 193 million in 2021; whereas the WTO Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture explicitly acknowledges the importance of considering food security in ongoing negotiations; whereas trade has the potential to enhance the availability of food in regions where it is limited, and trade can also contribute to improved economic access to food by generating employment opportunities and boosting incomes;
- L. whereas as of 11 December 2019, the WTO Appellate Body ceased to be operational, bringing to a standstill the functional, independent and impartial appellate stage in dispute settlement; whereas facilitator-led discussion on dispute settlement reform since MC13 has not yet led to a satisfactory outcome;
- M. whereas for over 20 years, the European Parliament, together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, has played a crucial role in establishing a parliamentary dimension to the WTO through the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO;
- N. whereas during the WTO Public Forum held on 17 and 18 September 2025, the conveners actively encouraged the enhanced and structured engagement of the private sector, recognising its essential role in supporting an open, predictable and inclusive multilateral trading system;
- O. whereas the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) will take place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 26 to 29 March 2026;
- 1. Reiterates its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and underlines that a modernised multilateral system to govern trade is essential; calls for a trade agenda based on open and fair rules-based trade for the benefit of all, which contributes to

⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 'Indirect taxation of e-commerce and digital trade – Implications for developing countries', 2025.

sustainable economic development, thereby strengthening peace and security; emphasises that the WTO should promote the realisation of social and environmental rights, including the SDGs, and should ensure that multilaterally agreed and harmonised rules are applied by all;

2. Urges all WTO members to commit to a successful outcome for MC14, given the existential threat faced by the multilateral trading system; believes that MC14 should be the starting point for advancing and modernising the WTO to ensure it can play a role in addressing the challenges of the 21st century; calls on the WTO to move towards convening annual ministerial conferences, in place of the current biennial cycle, so as to strengthen political steering, accountability and the capacity of the WTO to respond in a timely manner to global trade challenges;

WTO modernisation

3. Calls on the WTO members to adopt a comprehensive package reviewing the monitoring, negotiating, deliberative and dispute-settlement functions of the WTO; fully supports the facilitator-led process on WTO modernisation and its agenda for MC14 on comprehensive modernisation and agrees with the three tracks proposed by the facilitator, namely governance, fairness (level playing field and balanced trade) and 'issues of our time'; calls for the approval of a clear roadmap for reform during MC14, in order to ensure that modernisation can be agreed at the 15th Ministerial Conference;
4. Underlines that predictability remains the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system and that core WTO disciplines, including on customs valuation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, trade facilitation and intellectual property, continue to provide essential legal certainty for governments and businesses worldwide;
5. Believes that the practice of equating consensus with unanimity in decision-making among the WTO's 166 members has contributed to paralysis; insists that the WTO needs to learn from other international organisations and introduce different approaches in decision-making, as well as have a constructive conversation on the practice of consensus and distinguish it from unanimity; stresses that the WTO should explore more effective and flexible decision-making, including the implementation of the concept of 'responsible consensus', whereby members would be encouraged to exercise veto power only where necessary and to provide clear justification, thereby fostering accountability and constructive participation; stresses furthermore that the WTO should also explore setting up a management or executive body with a specific role in agenda-setting

or supervisory functions, analogous to the executive boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank;

6. Encourages the advancement of negotiations on multilateral agreements, while stressing the need to create an easier path for plurilateral agreements to be integrated into the multilateral architecture in order to ensure progress in areas not mature enough for the entire membership; underlines that open plurilateral initiatives should allow any willing members to proceed; reiterates, therefore, its call on WTO members to reflect on a way to develop a new system whereby a single member or a group of non-participating members cannot block closer cooperation on a plurilateral initiative, especially when it is MFN-based and its benefits thus apply to the membership as a whole, and on that basis to establish a straightforward mechanism that would allow the resulting agreements to be incorporated into the WTO structure;
7. Regrets the increase in protectionist trade policies across the globe and the US decision to impose additional tariffs on imports from trading partners, including the EU, breaking away from the MFN principle without any justification; calls on the United States to constructively engage with WTO members in strengthening rather than undermining the multilateral trading system, thereby showing global leadership, and to deliver concrete outcomes at MC14; welcomes the fact that the United States has appointed an Ambassador to the WTO;
8. Reaffirms that the MFN principle constitutes a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system; underlines its central role in ensuring non-discrimination, predictability and fairness in international trade; stresses that any modernisation of the WTO should happen by changing the system rather than by disrespecting it;
9. Recognises India's ambitions to address the long-standing issue of public stockholding for food security purposes, but regrets India's lack of alignment with EU positions on the e-commerce moratorium, the fish subsidies negotiations and general progress on plurilateral negotiations; calls on India to allow other WTO members to make progress on all of these issues; regrets, furthermore, the fact that India has opposed expanding the WTO mandate to new issues related to the climate, labour and gender; calls on the Commission to also address these issues in the recently concluded EU-India trade agreement;
10. Notes China's decision to renounce WTO special and differential treatment benefits in future WTO deals, as other large developing members have already done; calls on China to ensure that this commitment is also reflected retroactively in the implementation of current WTO agreements;

11. Recalls that China's extensive use of state-owned enterprises, non-transparent subsidies and state-led industrial policies continues to create significant overcapacities and distortions in global trade; deplores China's weaponisation of trade and dependencies and its system of export controls that lack dual-use justifications; calls on China to make its WTO commitments consistent with its economic weight and to work towards levelling the playing field, addressing these issues and helping deliver WTO modernisation;
12. Underlines the need for like-minded partners that are committed to upholding and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading order, with the WTO at its core, to work together even more closely; insists, in this challenging context, that the EU must remain committed to being a reliable partner and supporting rules-based trade;
13. Calls on the WTO members to restore a fully functioning, independent, binding and two-tier dispute settlement system as an indispensable pillar of predictability, ensuring that rules are enforced through law rather than unilateral action, regardless of members' economic size or power;
14. Welcomes the fact that 58 WTO members (covering close to 60 % of world trade) have joined the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), as a temporary measure until a fully functioning WTO dispute settlement system is up and running again; calls on other members to join the MPIA to demonstrate their commitment to a fair and functioning dispute settlement system; stresses that the MPIA is a temporary and voluntary solution and must not become a permanent substitute for a multilateral appellate mechanism applicable to all WTO members;

Level playing field

15. Insists that fairness is the basis of an enduring and credible system; notes that current distortive state interventions, including large-scale industrial subsidies and non-market practices, which have led to tensions among members and resulted in costly subsidy races, have shown that the current subsidy rules have not been adapted to changing circumstances in global trade; insists that the reform of WTO rules on industrial subsidies and state interventions must be based on three complementary pillars: enhanced transparency and notification requirements, strengthened and clarified disciplines, and more effective remedies to address negative spillovers and overcapacity; calls for these topics to be addressed as a central part of WTO modernisation, on a par with other modernisation topics; expresses support for the process of informal deliberations as a means to increase shared understanding among WTO members and pave the way for rule-making;

16. Underlines that WTO rules and future disciplines must be compatible with the objectives of the Paris Agreement and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and support the transition to climate-neutral economies, and also effectively address negative spillover effects such as overcapacity and carbon-intensive supply chains, while avoiding unjustified trade restrictions;

Development dimension

17. Welcomes the entry into force in September 2025 of the first Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies; stresses the crucial importance of also reaching agreement swiftly on disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, which represent more than half of all fisheries subsidies, in order to avoid depleting marine biological resources and allow for their sustainable management, while respecting the need for special and differential treatment in line with SDG target 14,6;
18. Stresses the need to strengthen and mainstream the development dimension of the WTO, including through the WTO modernisation process, by recognising the diversity of developing countries' economic situations and avoiding a one-size-fits-all application of special and differential treatment and making the special and differential treatment provisions more granular and more evidence- and needs-based, subject to regular review, including clear graduation mechanisms, so that they can better meet the needs of developing countries, including least-developed countries; underlines, moreover, that members' self-designation of their development status cannot remain the sole criterion for special and differential treatment and calls for objective, transparent and regularly reviewed criteria, while ensuring adequate flexibility for the poorest and most vulnerable countries;
19. Welcomes the conclusion of the negotiations on the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement in order to create a fairer, more transparent, more efficient and more predictable environment for facilitating cross-border investment and the participation of developing countries in global investment flows; welcomes the support of 128 members (out of 166), including 91 developing economies (27 of which are least-developed countries), and urges the remaining members to lift their opposition and incorporate this agreement into the WTO rulebook under Annex 4: Plurilateral Trade Agreements;
20. Stresses the need to make progress in the agriculture negotiations in order to obtain credible outcomes on issues such as public stockholding for food security purposes, domestic support, market access, cotton, export restrictions and export competition, and the strengthening of the agricultural sector to respond to contemporary challenges including rural livelihoods and environmental

sustainability; underlines that the discussions should not only focus on reducing trade-distorting domestic support but also on integrating relevant global challenges, including food security and sustainability, into the agricultural discussions;

Digital dimension

21. Calls on the WTO members to renew, at MC14, the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce and the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions; considers that finding a permanent solution for the non-imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions is key for businesses worldwide, including those in developing countries;
22. Calls on the WTO members to support the incorporation of the Agreement on Electronic Commerce into the WTO framework as a matter of priority; points out that the agreement sets the first global rules for digital trade, creating a fair, predictable and transparent framework that benefits consumers and businesses by facilitating cross-border transactions, reducing barriers and promoting innovation and trust; emphasises that the agreement is designed to benefit developing countries and least-developed countries as much as advanced economies; welcomes the agreement's capacity-building initiatives and programmes to support developing and least-developed countries' efforts to harness the opportunities offered by digital trade; reiterates the importance of the agreement in supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; supports the co-conveners' efforts to achieve the prompt implementation of the Agreement;
23. Highlights the growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) systems in international trade; calls, in this context, for increased international cooperation on AI regulations and policies, while respecting the right to regulate of WTO members; underlines that the WTO should meaningfully contribute to the development of a robust, safe, inclusive and trustworthy AI governance framework for trade, including through the establishment of a dedicated WTO Working Group on Artificial Intelligence to facilitate dialogue, knowledge-sharing and cooperation among members on AI regulations and policies;

Parliamentary involvement

24. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of MC14 and is promptly updated and consulted during MC14;
25. Calls on the WTO members to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the WTO and the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO; commends the important work of the joint European Parliament and Inter-

Parliamentary Union Parliamentary Conference on the WTO; stresses the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to all trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation and implementation of WTO decisions; encourages leaders to support a new narrative on trade whereby trade is seen as an enabler for, rather than as a hindrance to, achieving sustainability, security and inclusiveness;

26. Calls on the WTO members to enhance discussions with all stakeholders, including civil society, businesses and trade unions, and to step up cooperation with other international organisations such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Labour Organization and the UN system more broadly; expects leaders to communicate more at every level about the benefits of rules-based trade;

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27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Director-General of the World Trade Organization and the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.