Global Industry Statement on the WTO E-Commerce Moratorium and Work Programme
Building a Durable Framework for Digital Trade and Development

Industry organizations from across the globe urge WTO Members to restore the WTO Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions (Moratorium) and the WTO Work Programme on Electronic Commerce (Work Programme), building on the substantial convergence achieved at the Fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in March in Yaoundé.

This statement expresses the strong and unequivocal support of the global business community – reiterated in 2022, 2024, and 2026 – for the Moratorium and the Work Programme.

Today, we again call for a long-term extension of the Moratorium and Work Programme. The lapse of the WTO's longest-standing multilateral framework for digital trade risks diminishing confidence in the WTO's ability to address the fastest-growing area of international trade. Digital trade has enormous potential to expand economic opportunities across developed and developing economies alike. The WTO should remain at the center of this work.

Nearly Three Decades of WTO Leadership on Digital Trade

For nearly three decades, the WTO membership has maintained a simple principle: electronic transmissions should not be subject to customs duties, while Members should have a common forum to examine the opportunities and challenges of digital trade.

At MC14, 165 of 166 Members ultimately supported an historic agreement to extend the Moratorium and Work Programme for over four years with an ongoing review process. This near-consensus provides a strong foundation for completing this agreement now.

The Moratorium and Work Programme Have Supported Digital Economic Growth

The case for a renewed long-term WTO agreement is clear: 2.2 billion people remained offline in 2025 and many economies face infrastructure, financing, and skills gaps. A renewed Moratorium and Work Programme can support efforts to narrow these gaps by preserving predictable access to digital tools and sustaining a forum for cooperation on digital development.

The Moratorium and Work Programme have operated during a period of extraordinary growth in digitally enabled trade. Trade in "other commercial services" – which include many digitally deliverable services – reached US$5.78 trillion in 2025. For developing and least-developed economies, exports of "other commercial services" increased from 34% to 48% of their total services exports between 2005 and 2022. WTO data show particularly strong 2025 growth in computer services (11%), information services (15%), and financial services (10%).

Now the WTO faces a pivotal landscape shift due to artificial intelligence (AI). The WTO estimates that AI could increase global trade by 34% to 37% by 2040, with digital services trade rising by about 42%. Whether those gains are broadly shared will depend in part on access to connectivity, cloud computing, software, data-enabled services, skills, and other digital inputs. A meaningful extension of the Moratorium and Work Programme can help broaden participation in these gains across economies at all levels of development.

A Long-Term Extension Will Further Support Digital Economic Opportunity

A long-term extension of the Moratorium and Work Programme will support:

- **Access to digital tools and services**. A long-term extension will help governments, businesses, and consumers access software, cloud services, digital content, knowledge, and other inputs important to local innovation and AI adoption.
- **Bridging the digital divide**. A long-term extension will support more stable cooperation on connectivity, digital skills, secure infrastructure, financing, and technical assistance.
- **Inclusive trade by MSMEs**. A long-term extension will help grow economic opportunities for MSMEs. For example, Indonesian MSMEs that adopted digital services reported that they increased profits by over 20%, grew their consumer base by 31%, and were 4.6 times more likely to export than MSMEs that did not adopt those services. Research from India and South Africa similarly link greater access to digital services with higher MSME employment.
- **Jobs Growth:** The OECD estimates that, in Brazil, France, and the US, every additional job in a tradable services sector generates 0.6–1.6 additional jobs in local non-tradable services.
- **Better revenue collection**. IMF analysis finds value-added taxes (VAT) to be more efficient and capable of raising revenue on digital services than customs duties. The OECD estimates that hypothetical customs revenue foregone under the Moratorium would be barely one tenth of one percent of overall government revenue. A report by the World Bank and others finds that in most cases VAT/GST taxes would fully offset hypothetical customs duties.

Build on Growing International Practice and Ensure No Member Is Left Behind

Support for duty-free electronic transmissions continues to broaden. At MC14, 165 WTO Members supported a longer-term landing zone. In parallel, 67 WTO Members representing approximately 70% of global trade advanced a new plurilateral Agreement on Electronic Commerce. Many other Members have made similar commitments through regional and bilateral agreements.

Restoring the multilateral Moratorium and Work Programme on a longer-term and more predictable basis remains the best way to ensure no Member is left behind. All WTO Members have a stake in helping shape future work on digital trade and development. All WTO Members should be included and their digital exporters protected from the risk of customs duties.

WTO Member convergence from MC14 should be translated rapidly into a durable multilateral outcome: restore the Moratorium and its related Work Programme on a long-term basis.