



**Ministerial Conference
Thirteenth Session
Abu Dhabi, 26-29 February 2024**

DRAFT ABU DHABI MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Revision

We, the Ministers, have met in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 26 February to 1 March 2024 for our Thirteenth Session. As we conclude our session, we would like to express deep appreciation to the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates for their excellent organization of the Conference and the warm hospitality we have received in Abu Dhabi.

1. Our Thirteenth Session takes place as we mark the 30th anniversary since the establishment of the WTO. On this occasion, we reaffirm the principles and objectives enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement.
2. We acknowledge that during these 30 years, WTO Members have sought to fulfil the objectives reflected in the Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement consistent with Members' respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development. Important progress has been made. We resolve to further strengthen the multilateral trading system to provide meaningful impetus to address global challenges.
3. We stress the importance of implementation of the WTO agreements, Ministerial Decisions and Declarations and take note of the progress on some issues reflected in the reports from the General Council and its subsidiary bodies. We instruct the relevant WTO bodies to expedite further work.
4. We reaffirm our commitment made at our Twelfth Session to work towards necessary reform of the WTO to improve all its functions and acknowledge the progress made in this regard. We note and value the work done to date to improve the daily functioning of WTO Councils, Committees and Negotiating Groups with a view to enhancing the WTO's efficiency, effectiveness, and facilitation of Members' participation in WTO work.¹ We instruct the General Council and its subsidiary bodies to continue to conduct this work and report progress as appropriate to the next Ministerial Conference.
5. We resolve to preserve and strengthen the ability of the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, to provide meaningful impetus to respond to current trade challenges, take advantage of available opportunities, and ensure the WTO's proper functioning.
6. We underscore the importance of open, inclusive, resilient, sustainable, diversified and reliable global supply chains, and their role in ensuring that production and trade can more easily recover from crisis and disruptions. We note the work being done in WTO bodies, especially on transparency including information sharing, and welcome efforts to promote the resilience of global supply chains.
7. We reiterate the centrality of the development dimension in the work of the WTO. We recognise that the full integration of developing Members, including least-developed countries (LDCs), in the multilateral trading system is important for their economic development and stress the need to make positive efforts so that the gains from trade benefit them in accordance with the Marrakesh Agreement.

¹ A report containing the state of play of this work since MC12 can be found in document [WT/MIN\(24\)/7/Rev.1](#).

8. We reaffirm the provisions of special and differential treatment for developing Members and LDCs as an integral part of the WTO and its agreements. Special and differential treatment in WTO agreements should be precise, effective and operational. In addition, we recall that trade is to be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment, pursuing sustainable development of Members, and enhancing the means for doing so in a manner consistent with Members' respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development. We instruct officials to continue to work on improving the application of S&DT in the CTD SS and other relevant venues in the WTO, as agreed and report on progress to the General Council before MC14.

9. We recognise the role of the Working Group on Trade and Technology Transfer in coordinating discussions within the WTO and encourage their continuation, including by continuing to work with other relevant international organizations.

10. We recognise the particular vulnerability and special needs of LDCs. In this regard, we underscore that their interests should be given due priority for them to secure meaningful integration into the multilateral trading system. We note our instructions in Paragraph 8 of the MC12 Outcome Document concerning operationalisation of decisions taken in favor of the LDCs and acknowledge the work done so far. We instruct the relevant bodies to continue their work, and the General Council to report back to our next Session on progress.

11. Recalling that, at our Twelfth Session, we recognised the role that certain measures in the WTO can play to facilitate smooth and sustainable transition for Members after their graduation from LDC Category, we welcome the Decision adopted by the General Council in [WT/L/1172](#).

12. We recognise the importance of the Aid for Trade Initiative for developing Members, including LDCs, for trade-related capacity building, and for contributing to their integration into the multilateral trading system. We recognise the contributions made by the WTO's Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) in this regard and by the contributors to the range of extra budgetary funds managed by the WTO that support training and capacity building for developing Members. We look forward to the outcomes of the 9th Global Review and recognise the continuing need for this initiative. We also note the efforts and discussions underway among certain Members to continue extra budgetary trade-related technical assistance dedicated to LDCs.

13. We reaffirm our commitment to the Work Programme on Small Economies and to facilitate the integration of small, vulnerable economies (SVEs) into the multilateral trading system by continuing to highlight their priorities and seek solutions in all aspects of the work of the WTO.

14. We acknowledge the importance of dedicated sessions on transit at the Committee on Trade Facilitation. We instruct the Committee on Trade and Development to hold focused sessions, to assess trade-related challenges identified for the fuller integration of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) into the multilateral trading system. The Committee on Trade and Development shall report to the General Council and propose recommendations, if any, to the Fourteenth Session of the Ministerial Conference.

15. In recalling the objectives in the Marrakesh Agreement and in recognizing the role that the multilateral trading system can play in contributing towards the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, in so far as they relate to the WTO mandate, we underscore the importance of trade and sustainable development in its three pillars – economic, social, and environmental.

16. We recognise that women's economic empowerment and women's participation in trade contributes to economic growth and sustainable development. We take note of WTO work, including in collaboration with other relevant international organizations, through activities such as capacity-building initiatives and sharing experience to facilitate women's participation in trade.²

² These are general messages on cross-cutting issues that do not change the rights or obligations of WTO Members and do not relate to any Joint Statement Initiatives.

17. We recognise the important role that Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) play in economic growth, sustainable development, and poverty reduction in all WTO Members, while noting the differences in context, challenges, and capabilities of MSMEs among Members. We take note of the WTO work, including in collaboration with other relevant international organizations through activities such as capacity-building initiatives, sharing of experience, and relevant tools and platforms to facilitate MSMEs participation in international trade.³

18. Members recognise the role and importance of services to the global economy as it generates more than two-thirds of global economic output and accounts for over half of all jobs. Services play a critical role in providing a stable environment for economic growth and development and tackling global challenges. We acknowledge the need to facilitate the increased participation of developing Members, including LDCs, in global services trade paying particular attention to sectors and modes of supply of export interest to them. We acknowledge the importance of the work undertaken in the Council for Trade in Services (in regular and special session) and its subsidiary bodies and commit to reinvigorate work on trade in services within the mandate of the GATS and other existing mandates including through further thematic, evidence-based discussions.

19. We celebrate the enlargement of the Organization in accordance with Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. We note with satisfaction that this Conference has completed the accession procedures for two least-developed countries, Comoros and Timor-Leste. We recognise the contribution of accessions to strengthening the multilateral trading system and recall our commitments at our Twelfth Session.

20. We recognise the special situation of the Members that acceded in accordance with Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization who have undertaken extensive commitments at the time of accession, including in market access. This situation shall be taken into account in negotiations.

21. We recognise the short-term challenges faced by Members, in particular developing Members, including LDCs, confronting global and domestic crises including disasters caused by natural hazards. We encourage relevant WTO bodies to continue Member-driven work, aimed at supporting resilience and disaster preparedness. Discussions may focus on how the WTO agreements can support crisis management frameworks, as well as how they contribute to preventing new risks, reducing existing risks, and increasing resilience. Discussions may include other relevant international organizations to promote coherence. A report of work undertaken and any recommendations for future action, as appropriate, based on Member's suggestions, shall be presented to the General Council ahead of MC14.

22. We recall the Declaration in MC12 on the "WTO Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Preparedness for Future Pandemics" and take note of the work done in relevant WTO Councils and Committees, as reflected in the General Council report in document [WT/MIN\(24\)/8](#). We encourage the relevant WTO bodies to continue their work as directed by the Declaration, based on Members' submissions, to review and build on all the lessons learned and the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, to build effective solutions in case of future pandemics in an expeditious manner. We also note the work of the WTO Secretariat in supporting this work with data, analysis, and technical cooperation, including through trilateral cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and cooperation with other relevant international organizations, and encourage it to continue doing so going forward, as appropriate.

23. We welcome the decisions or declarations adopted by Ministers as follows.

³ These are general messages on cross-cutting issues that do not change the rights or obligations of WTO Members and do not relate to any Joint Statement Initiatives.