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Delivering on digital trade at MC14: From JSI e-commerce to ITA

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 at a time when it is increasingly undermined.

We remain a strong supporter of a robust multilateral framework for digital trade and of a long-lasting and stable Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions, as demonstrated by our continued advocacy leading up to MC12 and 13 and the recent Joint Letter on the Moratorium [link here].

In addition, we call on WTO members to:

- Work towards the integration of the stabilised text of the Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce into the WTO's legal architecture, and ensure its implementation; and
- Develop a long-term plan to build a coalition of countries to expand the geographical and product scope of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA3), while guaranteeing consistent enforcement and gradual expansion of existing commitments.

Integrating the Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce in the WTO architecture

In July 2024, the co-convenors of the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on E-commerce announced the achievement of a stabilised text[1], marking the conclusion of over five years of negotiations.

We welcome this milestone and the progress made towards advancing digital trade facilitation, an open digital environment, and greater business and consumer trust. According to a DIGITALEUROPE study[2], Europe could be €2 trillion better off and gain two million jobs by the end of the Digital Decade if the power of international data transfers is harnessed to the maximum.

Meaningful progress has been achieved, and the JSI provides real added value to international digital trade, including through the commitment by its members to not impose customs duties on electronic transmissions. At the same time, we regret the absence of binding provisions to ensure cross-border data flows, to prohibit forced localisation of data storage, and to prohibit the forced transfer of technology, source code and algorithms. In addition, the principle of non-discriminatory

[1] World Trade Organization, "Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce," INF/ECOM/87 (July 26 2024), https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/INF/ECOM/87.pdf&Open=True

[2] DIGITALEUROPE, *Data Flows and the Digital Decade*, (June 2021), https://www.digitaleurope.org/resources/data-flows-and-the-digital-decade/

treatment for digital products in digital trade has not been properly established. Furthermore, without consensus on how to integrate the agreed text into the WTO framework, the agreement cannot yet deliver its full potential.

We therefore urge all WTO Members to move swiftly towards a common position and to ensure the integration of the JSI on E-commerce into the WTO's legal architecture. We also call on Members to continue negotiations with a view to incorporating currently excluded provisions and to advancing towards the development of higher-standard rules.

Expanding the Information Technology Agreement

Since the adoption of the first Information Technology Agreement (ITA1) in 1996 and its expansion through ITA2 in 2015, the benefits of lowering trade barriers for ICT products have been substantial. By 2022, global exports of ITA-covered goods reached USD 3.8 trillion under ITA1 and USD 2.5 trillion under ITA2, growing at compound annual rates of 6.2 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively[3].

Against this backdrop, we welcome the endorsement by ITA and ITA2 participants of a programme of discussions aimed at broadening the agreements' membership and examining the ITA's role in advancing AI and e-commerce[4].

We support a further expansion of product coverage to reflect emerging and future technologies through a potential ITA3. At the same time, we encourage a geographical expansion of all ITAs, encouraging more governments to join and become signatories. In parallel, we urge to consistently and effectively enforce the existing agreements.

MC14 offers the opportunity to form a coalition of countries driving forward a long-term plan. This plan should focus on both the development of an ITA3 and the geographical expansion of the existing ITA framework.

[3] Wirjo, Andre, and Sylwyn C. Calizo Jr. "More than just another expansion: Why does the 3rd information technology agreement (ITA3) need to be bold." *APEC Secretariat, APEC Policy Support Unit* (2024), https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2024/12/224_psu_pb64.pdf?sfvrsn=93022bf2_1

[4] World Trade Organization, "Members seek to broaden ITA participation, examine links with AI and e-commerce," news item, May 8 2025, https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news25_e/ita_08may25_e.htm