



March 17, 2026

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adrian Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Trade
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Linda Sánchez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Trade
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Smith and Smith and Ranking Members Neal and Sánchez:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to offer this statement for the record for the March 17 [hearing](#) of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade on “Advancing America’s Interests at the World Trade Organization’s 14th Ministerial Meeting.”

The World Trade Organization (WTO) will hold its 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) on March 26-29 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and the Chamber intends to be present. Africa’s booming trade opportunities provide a dynamic backdrop for the meetings, which will see trade ministers from the WTO’s 166 member countries as well as business and civil society leaders to press for progress in trade negotiations. It’s also a chance for businesses to show support for the global rules-based trading system that sits at a critical juncture.

American businesses rely on the WTO’s rules—every day of the year—all around the globe. In addition to the successful elimination of trade barriers brought about under the WTO and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the WTO rulebook protects American companies and the workers they employ from discriminatory treatment and trade “rules” that are just disguised protectionism. It has helped streamline customs practices, opened government procurement markets in a reciprocal manner, and enhanced the transparency and predictability of services trade. The Trump administration has continued to draw on these WTO commitments, including in the bilateral deals it is striking with various partners.

U.S. leadership is critical in shepherding the organization through its next phase. As the U.S. Chamber published recently, Washington must play a constructive role in pressing for tangible reforms and recalibrating global rules. The U.S. was a leader in the WTO's inception: Without American leadership today, governments that do not share our goals or values will have more sway in shaping the global trade rulebook.

For the U.S. business community, three priorities top the list for the ministerial:

- **Deliver Real World Outcomes:** Member countries must demonstrate that the WTO can still work by delivering the top item on MC14's proposed "to do" list—that is, agreeing to permanently renew the moratorium on duties on electronic transmissions (known as the "e-commerce moratorium"). Allowing countries to take the unprecedented step of imposing tariffs on digital transmissions would raise costs for businesses of all sizes and fragment the digital economy. The Chamber appreciates the administration's prioritization of the moratorium—which has been in place for nearly 30 years—including by securing commitments of support from key trading partners over the past several months. In addition, MC14 should clinch progress toward concluding the next phase of the agreement to limit the subsidies for fisheries that have contributed significantly to depletion of fish stocks. Progress toward these goals would affirm the WTO's ability to produce real world deliverables.
- **Address Long-Neglected Commitments:** A number of longstanding issues are ripe for attention, including those on transparency and special and differential treatment (S&DT). On transparency, WTO members agreed decades ago to notify the organization—and other trading partners—of their subsidies; abiding by this commitment is a first step toward reining in these wasteful and unfair practices—but notifications often never arrive. The business community is pressing for meaningful action vis-à-vis the enforcement of subsidy notification commitments and assessment of development definitions within the parameters of S&DT, which should be updated to more accurately reflect the realities of today.
- **Establish a Pragmatic Way Forward:** MC14 also presents an opportunity to chart a path for more realistic approaches to work going forward, including via "plurilateral" negotiations. Allowing "coalitions of the willing" to negotiate new trade deals among themselves is one way to end the "hostage taking" in which a single WTO member can block progress—even though the blocking party wouldn't be disadvantaged by any resulting deal. Recently concluded plurilateral agreements like the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement and the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on E-Commerce are critical to advancing forward-looking conversations. Officially enshrining these kinds of

agreements into the WTO framework would be a major step for ministers to take this year.

The WTO's upcoming ministerial is an opportunity to demonstrate the organization's relevance to today's trading system. It provides members with a chance to capitalize on and optimize consensus, facilitate new agreements, and outline ways the system can continue delivering practical value. The business community will continue to join the administration to press for positive change at the WTO—and to make MC14 successful in producing tangible outcomes that work for American workers, consumers, and businesses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

John Murphy
Senior Vice President and
Head of International
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

cc: Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade