



Resolution of MC14 Issues at Next General Council

*Endorsed by the SME Global
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Knowing that there were never high expectations for a breakthrough at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, yet the outcome still falls short, with several deliverables left unresolved. SMEs rely on predictable trade rules but are hit hardest by volatility and WTO inaction. Now, ministers aim to resolve issues at the May General Council, and SME Global urges them to conclude without delay to provide certainty for small businesses.

A clear priority must be advancing WTO reform and strengthening the framework for digital trade—most urgently through extending the e-commerce moratorium. Without a work programme for reform, the WTO risks losing its effectiveness in dispute settlement, eroding the stability and predictability that SMEs depend on to plan, invest, and scale internationally. Allowing the e-commerce moratorium to lapse would be significantly harmful as it could enable the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions, raising costs and introducing new barriers for SMEs engaged in cross-border digital trade. At a minimum, the moratorium should be extended without interruption; ideally, it should be made permanent.

There were some modest positives, as momentum shifted toward plurilateral initiatives, with 66 members adopting interim arrangements to implement the first-ever plurilateral e-commerce agreement. There were also commitments to better integrate SMEs into global trade, along with steps to improve the implementation of SPS and TBT measures—these are encouraging developments.

The International Democracy Union therefore resolves:

- Looking ahead, three structural actions should be taken forward:
 1. First, decision-making must become more effective. The consensus-based approach is clearly not delivering results. Members must explore alternative, responsible decision-making mechanisms to avoid paralysis.
 2. Second, ministerial engagement must increase. Political will is essential to unlock reform. In times of crisis, actors meet more frequently to respond, and this sense of urgency must now be applied to the WTO through annual ministerials.

3. Third, the WTO must strengthen its engagement with the business community. These are the actors who use the trading system daily, and their perspective is essential. A structured and regular dialogue with businesses would help ensure that WTO rules reflect economic realities.
- The outcome of MC14 shows that the system is struggling to deliver. For SMEs, this is not an abstract concern; it directly affects their ability to compete, innovate, and grow internationally. Reform is no longer optional but essential to restore trust, predictability, and relevance in the global trading system.