

Recap of FMG Discussion on Global Turbulence and WTO Reform IV

8 December 2025

Questions to discuss:

1. What is the potential scenario on deliverables of WTO reform for MC14? In what formats for different options? What is in your view the political support for those deliverables?
2. How do we engage all WTO members, before and at MC14??

On Question 1:

➤ It is widely shared that MC14 comes at a challenging moment given the evolving complexity of global trade and geopolitical tension, hence should not be “business as usual”. Everyone supports WTO’s efforts for meaningful deliverables at MC14. However, many remain cautious on the lack of political will for significant progress at MC14, and on the risk to label it as a “reform ministerial.”

➤ Many suggest a minimalist outcome by focusing on a few concrete and doable deliverables to respond to the call for WTO actions. Such deliverables could include:

- e-commerce moratorium
- integration of IFD
- transparency with improved notifications and enhanced Secretariat monitoring including via WTO-IMF collaboration
- accessions (e.g., Uzbekistan)
- securing more ratifications for Fish 1 and,
- progress on JSIs.

➤ Many support the process led by reform facilitator Norwegian ambassador, including the recent Reform Week on decision-making, development and SDT, and level playing field, and by focusing on the post-MC14 process instead of forcing for substantial agreements. Some welcomes the broadening of scope for discussion of these issues, e.g. on level playing field, to include industrialization and policy space. Meanwhile, there is a common concern about the “Christmas tree” phenomenon and positions-repeating by members.

➤ Some suggest that MC14 serves as an interim checkpoint, with ministers reflecting upon past work, reaffirming the need for further reform, and committing to a post-MC14 work program. Many believes that, if not possible multilaterally, similar efforts should be made for an open “coalition of the willing”, with a common reform agenda and a to-do-list. Some suggest that such a coalition could be an open EU+CPTPP or FIT-P fitting into Geneva process, and launch a reform agenda focusing on the institutional fixes first (e.g., decision-making or SDT).

➤ Some proposes to prepare already this “coalition of the willing” as Plan B. However, some others point to the evolving complexity, particularly related to some major players, and suggested that “Plan B” should be “Plan A.”

On Question 2:

➤ Some caution against using MC14 as a tournament to criticize certain members, which they believe would not serve the purpose. They believe that it is more important to be honest with the challenges and differing positions.

➤ Some others suggest to wake up to the new reality and focus on what other members can do together to advance the system. Some share previously proposed strategy “to contain and to preserve” and encouraged other members to stick to WTO rules and principles (i.e. a sleeping beauty model), to avoid further eroding the system, and to help restore predictability and stability for the private sector.

➤ On IFD integration, some suggest to engage the few members, who may be more open to pragmatic solutions at MC14, to exert pressure on the remaining one.

➤ On dispute settlement, many suggest to expand MPIA participation, particularly by engaging vulnerable developing countries with targeted technical assistance and capacity building.

➤ On development, many welcomes the recent announcement to forego SDT and call upon other capable developing countries, particularly those in G20, to follow suit, or to reaffirm their previously announced position of the same nature.

Note:

This is a personal summary by Prof. Xiankun LU of key elements of recent FMG discussions. This document is not an official FMG paper nor an approved summary of the discussions.