Press conference
OWINFS at WTO MC14

March 26, 17:00 - 17:30pm
Press Briefing room
WTO Conference Center
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Brief

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is collapsing under its own contradictions. It has failed to uphold its development mandate, kicking away the development ladder for the Global South and denying it the needed policy space for industrialisation and food sovereignty. The injustice reveals a double standard where developed nations increasingly use unilateral sanctions and tariffs with impunity, while the paralysis of the WTO Appellate Body ensures the Global South cannot fight back. As multilateralism no longer serves dominant economic powers, a coup disguised as reform is underway at the WTO, with the US and other developed countries pushing for plurilateral agreements to superimpose their trade agenda on all WTO member countries.

The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) will be held from March 26 to 29, 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. As the first WTO Ministerial Conference to be hosted in Sub-Saharan Africa in over a decade, it carries importance for asserting the demands and development priorities of the Global South. It also unfolds amid heightening inter-imperialist trade wars, intensifying competition over strategic sectors and resources, and a deepening crisis of global economic governance.

Our World is not for Sale (OWINFS) network is thrilled to invite you to its press conference to present what are the main challenges at stake for this MC14. Various experts from the North and the South will present the key areas of negotiations and display our recommendations.

Speakers and topics

1. **Welcome to the press conference**
   – Melanie Foley, Deputy Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, USA (2 min.)
2. **WTO reform and plurilaterals/JSIs and process issues for MC14**
   – Jane Kelsey, Professor, University of Auckland, New Zealand (8 min.)
3. **E-commerce**
   – Sofia Scassera, Associated Researcher, Transnational Institute, Argentina (5 min.)

4. **Agriculture & fisheries**
   – Ranja Sengupta, Senior Researcher, Third World Network, India (7 min.)

5. **Implications for Africa of what's on the table for MC14**
   – Jane Nalunga, SEATINI (5 min.)
6. **Quick Q&A**

Quotes

On agriculture:

- "To improve farmers' livelihood, enhance food security, we need the permanent solution on public stockholding, which must be the top priority in the agricultural negotiations."

On WTO reform:

- "The push to legitimise plurilateral agreements aims to sideline multilateralism so that self-selective groups of more powerful states can cherry-pick what they negotiate, and refuse to engage matters that are vital to the developing world."
- "The crisis in the WTO is an opportunity. OWINFS has said for years the institution is bankrupt. Far from trying to rescue it, we need to confront the crises of our time"

On environment:

- "Trade rules must ensure that the new demand for critical minerals does not reduce Global South countries to the role of mere exporters of raw materials, thereby repeating colonial patterns."

On e-commerce:

- "The e-commerce moratorium is a relic from the past and must be terminated in Yaounde. With digital goods and services dominating global trade, including AI flows, and complete non-clarity about what the Moratorium covers, and what not, the Moratorium now appears to be a deliberately deceptive piece of text.

Press contact

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