UK boosts global trade partnerships to help economies grow through stronger, fairer trading systems

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New support package announced at WTO Ministerial Conference to help countries trade more, build resilience, and reduce long-term reliance on aid.

The UK has announced a new package of support at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cameroon, focused on helping countries strengthen their trading systems, connect more businesses to global markets, and build long-term economic resilience. These improvements will help countries grow through trade and, over time, reduce their need for aid.

Working in partnership with governments, regional institutions, and global bodies such as the WTO and World Bank, the UK is supporting a series of initiatives that make trade faster, safer and more predictable. This includes work to streamline customs processes, improve food safety and plant health standards, modernise regulations, and provide expert legal support so countries can participate fully and fairly in global trading rules.

Minister of State at the Department for Business and Trade, Chris Bryant, made the announcement today at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), being held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Minister of State for Business and Trade Chris Bryant said:

“Trade is one of the most powerful tools we have for driving growth and creating opportunity, both at home and around the world. This investment in our Aid for Trade programmes demonstrates the UK’s commitment to a global trading system that works for everyone, not just the wealthiest nations.

“By working in partnership with developing countries to overcome barriers to trade, we are opening up new markets for British businesses whilst supporting economic growth where it is needed most. A stronger, fairer multilateral trading system benefits us all.”

UK Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO, Kumar Iyer, said:

“The UK has long been a champion of the rules-based multilateral trading system, and this announcement reinforces our commitment to ensuring it delivers for all WTO members.

“At a time of global uncertainty, it is more important than ever that we invest in the institutions and programmes that support countries so they can trade on equal terms.

“These contributions are not traditional aid, they are investments in shared prosperity and a more stable, predictable global economy which benefit both British companies and developing economies alike.”

The Aid for Trade package of £13 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) into seven initiatives will enable developing economies to participate more effectively in the global trading system. The UK has also transferred £1m to the WTO Fisheries Fund, to help countries protect marine resources by phasing out harmful subsidies and strengthening coastal livelihoods.

By working together with international partners, the UK is helping build a stronger global economy where countries can grow through their own success, creating more reliable trading relationships, more resilient markets and shared prosperity for the long term.

This is part of the modern approach to development as set out by the Foreign Secretary when she made her announcement on the new ODA allocations on 19 March 2026.

As trade ministers from WTO member countries gather in Cameroon's capital, reform of the organisation will be high on the agenda. Building on the policy paper published earlier this month, the UK will be setting out a clear vision for a more relevant, flexible and functional WTO.

Notes to Editors:

The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) is taking place in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The Ministerial Conference is the WTO's highest decision-making body.

The UK's funding will support:

- £5 million to the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) – helping the world's least developed countries put trade at the heart of their development plans. The UK was the single largest donor to Phase 2 of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, contributing $22.7 million over six years.
- £3 million to the Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme – strengthening implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement to drive down the cost of trade and boost predictability at the border.
- £1.75 million to the World Bank Umbrella Facility for Trade – supporting 122 countries to make trade greener, more resilient and more inclusive.
- £1 million to the Standards and Trade Development Facility – enabling countries to meet food safety and plant health standards.
- £1 million to the Advisory Centre on WTO Law – ensuring developing countries can access legal support in trade disputes.
- £750,000 to the World Bank Competitiveness for Jobs and Economic Transformation (C-JET) Programme – funding Needs Assessments and supporting implementation of the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement as the donation will be part of the formal WTO Needs Assessment programme.
- £500,000 to the WTO Global Trust Fund – supporting the Trade in Services for Development Initiative.

The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies entered into force in September 2025 and is the first WTO agreement centred on environmental sustainability. The UK committed to donate £1m to the fund in December 2023 and has now transferred the funding.

The UK published a policy paper on reforming the WTO on 6 March 2026 - WTO reform

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-boosts-global-trade-partnerships-to-help-economies-grow-through-stronger-fairer-trading-systems