

WTO General Council March 2026: UK Statement Day 1 and Day 2

14.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

UK Statement at the World Trade Organization's General Council in Geneva. Delivered by the UK's Permanent Representative to the WTO and UN, Kumar Iyer.

Agenda item 1 - TNC report

On the papers that have been put forward, we would like to thank all the chairs for their efforts in navigating some significantly divergent positions and difficult conversations that they have had to get this far. On agriculture, we would like to thank the chair for putting forward the text and we believe we can support this going forward to ministers. On fisheries, likewise we would like to thank the chair, and we support the declaration going to ministers and believe this is extremely helpful in keeping ministerial connection going forward.

On development, we welcome the G90's constructive, process orientated approach. We believe there is scope to reach agreement on the process itself before MC14, taking it forward to Yaoundé for ministerial blessing, and there will obviously be conversations to be had on return.

Agenda item 2 - report from chairpersons

Thank you, Chair. I'll be brief, I think given where we were six months ago, the support for the work plan in this room is genuinely astonishing and a testimony to the work of the facilitator. I think whilst it's not everything that we want, or everything that anyone wants, on the basis of support in this room it is definitely the only credible way to proceed and the only credible way out the status quo. For those that are content without having change, I would draw attention to the fact that the status quo is not really viable. I think for many the costs of the WTO are on track to exceed its considerable benefits and I would say that for some members that switch may already have come. I think our choices are either orderly change or a disorderly one. The UK, for its part, is committed to start work on the work plan in April and, I think, from the support in this room, it sounds like we will not be alone. Thank you.

Agenda item 2b - Report from Reform facilitator

We are focussing ministers' time in Yaoundé on things that really make a difference and there is a danger that we digress and we waste ministerial concentration. I think it was clear also yesterday from the majority of voices that we heard in the room that there was a real desire to have serious and considered discussions on reform and we shouldn't lose track of that as we proceed. In terms of the reports presented, we very much welcome the report of the facilitator on the work programme in e-commerce. The UK is a co-sponsor of the proposals for a permanent moratorium and an additional committee on trade; we think both are very much ready to go to Yaoundé. On the question of an outcome document, the UK, like others, doesn't believe that this is necessary as a marker of success and we think valiant efforts have been made to try and bring members together. From what we hear I think it is apparent that views are very divergent and far apart and sometimes there's just a limit to the amount of diplomacy one can enact here in Geneva, going through. We see real value in a Chair's statement as an alternative and would support that and I would say, like others, we really can't repeat what happened at MC13. Our ministers need to focus their time on things that really shift the needle, otherwise we will find our ministers disengaging from these conferences.

Thank you.

Agenda item 3 - Views and updates of ongoing efforts by members

Concern remains on the long list of items that are here and our request would be that we prioritise ministerial time on areas that are ready for action at MC14. This does not mean that work on these areas should halt altogether, in fact progress should continue as needed after MC14. The UK stands ready to engage. In terms of priorities, the UK believes the IFDA is of course a priority for MC14. It is ripe for decision and for incorporation in Yaoundé. On LDC Graduation, the UK very much supports a smooth transition period. The UK's preferences scheme already provides a three-year transition period plus a further enhanced preferences period thereafter. We acknowledge that not all members agree with this and we would recognise the diversity of members within the LDC grouping and would encourage them to consider alternative approaches also as they engage those members who are still deciding their position on this. Thank you, that's all from us.

Published statement does not include opening remarks.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/wto-general-council-march-2026-uk-statement-day-1-and-day-2>