

JOINT PRESS RELEASE
ADOPTION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT ON E-COMMERCE WITH
INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

**Jointly issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
Australia; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan; Ministry of Economy,
Trade and Industry, Japan; and Ministry of Trade and Industry,
Singapore**

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1. 66 WTO Members, covering approximately 70% of global trade, have adopted a clear and immediate pathway to implement the world's first baseline set of global digital trade rules at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) on 28 March 2026.

2. The interim arrangements, adopted by the participating 66 WTO Members, would provide a pathway to bring the *WTO Agreement on Electronic Commerce* (E-Commerce Agreement) into force, while continuing to work towards its incorporation into the WTO legal framework of rules.

3. WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, in remarks to mark the occasion, said: “Digital trade is an exciting frontier for driving economic growth and job creation. By moving forward with the E-Commerce Agreement, participating economies are helping to establish a shared regulatory framework that can lower costs and unlock new opportunities. They are also demonstrating that the multilateral trading system can respond, and is responding, to new challenges and changing economic circumstances. Continued cooperation is vital to ensure that digital trade remains open and predictable, and that its benefits are shared across economies at all levels of development.”

4. This step marks a significant milestone. With digital transactions accounting for over 60% of global GDP, there is an urgent need to implement global digital trade rules that allow businesses and consumers to seize the benefits of digital trade.¹ WTO and OECD research shows that not implementing the E-Commerce Agreement leaves around US \$159 billion worth of trade on the table every year.²

5. The E-Commerce Agreement will significantly bolster stability and predictability for businesses and consumers around the world. It will unlock new opportunities for micro, small, and medium enterprises by reducing regulatory barriers and enhancing access to global markets. Recognizing the importance of inclusive growth, the E-Commerce Agreement will also support developing and least-developed country Parties through flexible implementation periods, technical assistance, and initiatives under the Capacity Building Framework.

6. In addition, the implementation of the E-Commerce Agreement demonstrates that the WTO remains a vital platform for developing modern trade rules and addressing pressing trade policy issues at a critical time for global trade and the multilateral trading system.

7. The 66 WTO Members will now proceed with their respective domestic procedures. The E-Commerce Agreement will enter into force for those Members that have accepted it, after 45 Members have deposited their instruments of acceptance.

8. In parallel, the 66 WTO Members reaffirm their commitment to seeking incorporation of the E-Commerce Agreement into the WTO legal framework of rules, and will continue to engage and encourage all WTO Members to join the E-Commerce Agreement. If

¹ European Commission (n.d.), Digital Trade Agreements available at https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/help-exporters-and-importers/accessing-markets/goods-and-services/digital-trade/digital-trade-agreements_en

² Bekkers, López-González and So (23 September 2025), Great Expectations: Quantifying the Potential Impact of the WTO Agreement on E-commerce available at https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd202506_e.pdf

implemented by all WTO Members, the E-Commerce Agreement would boost global GDP by US \$8.7 trillion by 2040, with low- and lower middle-income economies projected to reap the most benefits.³

9. Singapore Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations and Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, Grace Fu, said: “Singapore welcomes this pivotal milestone. Early implementation of the same digital trade rules across 66 Members will unlock opportunities for our people and businesses in the digital economy. This achievement also reinforces the WTO’s indispensable role in the multilateral trading system. We will continue our efforts to incorporate the ECA into the WTO legal framework and invite more WTO Members to join the agreement to maximize its impact.”

10. Australia Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Matt Thistlethwaite, said: “Australia is proud to lead, with Singapore and Japan, delivery of the first set of digital trade rules with global reach. The arrangements we are announcing today will deliver tangible benefits for our businesses and consumers, and support developing countries to share fully in the benefits of the digital economy.”

11. Japan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Motegi Toshimitsu, said: “Japan, as one of the co-convenors, heartily welcomes, together with a remarkable number of co-sponsors, the adoption of the interim arrangements for the Agreement on Electronic Commerce. This initiative will further promote global digital trade of growing importance, exemplify the significance of the WTO’s rule-making function and strengthen the multilateral trading system. Japan will continue to take the lead in achieving the incorporation of this Agreement into the WTO Agreement.”

12. Japan State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Yamada Kenji, said: “This is a historic step in implementing global digital trade rules, which also serves as a successful milestone of the WTO’s rule-

³ Bekkers et al., (2025).

making function in plurilateral format. Japan is honored to have contributed as a co-convenor. The Agreement on Electronic Commerce is expected to enhance predictability for businesses and reduce business costs.”

13. Canada Minister of International Trade, Maninder Sidhu, said: “Launching the ECA’s interim arrangements represents a milestone for global digital trade. I am pleased to see a path forward for a plurilateral initiative conceived and negotiated at the WTO, to deliver much-needed certainty and stability for consumers and businesses.”

14. China Minister of Commerce, Wang Wentao, said: “The WTO Electronic Commerce Agreement establishes global rules for digital trade, which will effectively promote more inclusive and sustainable digital growth. China supports the timely implementation of the Agreement and hopes WTO can play a greater role in shaping digital trade rules in the future.”

15. Costa Rica Minister of Foreign Trade, Manuel Tovar Rivera, said: “Costa Rica celebrates this unprecedented achievement, which expands opportunities for our countries to participate in the digital economy, helps bridge the digital divide, and benefits businesses and consumers across our region.”

16. The European Union (EU) Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Maroš Šefčovič, said: “The interim implementation of the E-commerce Agreement marks an important step towards securing a more open, predictable and trusted digital trading environment. As the global economy becomes increasingly digitalised, such common international rules will help businesses and consumers – in developed and developing countries alike – to fully participate in global digital trade.”

17. The Gambia Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment, Mod K Ceesay, said: “The E-Commerce Agreement is a

forward-looking step toward harnessing digital trade for sustainable development. For The Gambia, it supports innovation, expands opportunities for our businesses, and strengthens collaboration with partners committed to shaping a fair, transparent, and inclusive digital economy for the future.”

18. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) Director General of the Department of Trade Negotiation and Economic Cooperation, Saysana Sayakone, said: “The Lao PDR welcomes the launch of the Interim Arrangements of the E-Commerce Agreement as an important milestone for global digital trade. The ECA can support developing and LDC Members in harnessing e-commerce, expanding market opportunities, and strengthening the continued relevance of the WTO in the evolving digital economy.”

19. Mauritius Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dhananjay Ramful, said: “Mauritius welcomes the WTO E-Commerce Agreement as a milestone driving digital inclusion, bridging the digital divide, and empowering developing and small economies to fully participate and thrive in the global digital economy.”

20. Peru’s Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism, César Augusto Llona Silva, said: “Peru welcomes the opportunity to begin working closely with the co-sponsors of the Agreement towards its interim entry into force and we recognize the importance of advancing its incorporation into Annex 4 of the WTO.”

21. The Philippines Undersecretary, Allan P. Gepty, said: “For developing Members like the Philippines, the E-Commerce Agreement provides a valuable framework to support MSMEs participation in global trade by enhancing trust and improving digital connectivity. The Interim Arrangements mark an important step toward predictable, modern digital trade rules and their integration into the WTO framework.”

22. Switzerland State Secretary, Helene Budliger Artieda, said: “The E-commerce Agreement marks a milestone for the WTO. It promotes trust, transparency, and interoperability in the digital sphere. Switzerland is proud to support an outcome that reduces barriers, fosters innovation, and enables companies of all sizes to participate confidently in global digital markets.”

23. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of Foreign Trade, Dr Thani Bin Ahmed Alzeyoudi, said: “The E-Commerce Agreement represents our collective response to digital realities reshaping modern trade. It strengthens the WTO’s relevance and delivers tangible benefits for our businesses and consumers. The UAE strongly encourages WTO members to adhere to the ECA and endorse its incorporation into Annex 4.”

24. The United Kingdom (UK) Business and Trade Secretary, Peter Kyle, said: “As the first global digital trade deal, this will make trade cheaper, faster and more secure for businesses around the world. The UK is proud to have played a part in this milestone, which will make the WTO more relevant, flexible and accessible and provide our businesses with more certainty and more opportunities.”

Attachment: Factsheet on the E-Commerce Agreement

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FACTSHEET ON THE WTO E-COMMERCE AGREEMENT

A. Enabling Electronic Commerce

Electronic Transactions Framework

- The E-Commerce Agreement encourages the adoption of legal frameworks that recognize electronic transactions and treat electronic and paper-based information as legal equivalents. The E-Commerce Agreement also encourages legal use and recognition of electronic transferable records, such as bills of lading, bills of exchange and promissory notes.

Electronic Invoicing (E-invoicing)

- The E-Commerce Agreement ensures that electronic invoices are legally valid, with any exceptions clearly set out in legislation or regulations. It also seeks to establish common principles and cooperation on interoperability of e-invoicing frameworks to support cross-border interoperability.

Electronic Signatures (E-signatures)

- The E-Commerce Agreement enables businesses and consumers to trust that signatures, seals, time stamps and registered delivery services are accepted in their electronic forms. It also encourages cooperation on the mutual recognition of e-signatures.

Electronic Authentication (E-authentication)

- The E-Commerce Agreement facilitates interoperable e-authentication and allows businesses to adopt appropriate authentication and signature methods for their transactions, subject to certain performance standards or certification by an accredited authority, where required.

Electronic Contracts

- The E-Commerce Agreement ensures that electronic contracts are not denied validity and legal enforceability because they have been made by electronic means, with exceptions set out in legislation or regulations. This helps businesses and consumers reduce costs and enhance accessibility by allowing remote conclusion of contracts with enhanced security protection.

Paperless Trading

- The E-Commerce Agreement promotes the use, exchange and acceptance of electronic trade documents, thereby reducing administrative barriers, transaction costs and time taken to import and export goods.

Single Window

- The E-Commerce Agreement streamlines import, export, and transit procedures for businesses by encouraging parties to allow trade administration documents to be submitted through a single-entry point in each jurisdiction. This will make trade faster, simpler, and cheaper while enabling enhanced compliance, safeguarding and security across the supply chain.

Electronic Payments (E-payments)

- The E-Commerce Agreement provides regulation of e-payments, to create an environment to allow innovative firms to thrive, both domestically and internationally. It also provides a baseline for the development of regulations for this crucial sector and facilitates transparency and fosters the adoption of international standards.

B. Openness and Electronic Commerce

Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions

- The E-Commerce Agreement prohibits the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions between a person of one party and a person of another party. This provides businesses the certainty to

trade openly in the new global digital economy. Parties may review the Article after five years and consider whether any amendments are appropriate.

Open Government Data

- The E-Commerce Agreement facilitates public access to government data to foster economic and social development, competitiveness, and innovation.

Access to and Use of the Internet for Electronic Commerce

- The E-Commerce Agreement recognizes the importance of open access to and use of the internet for e-commerce.

C. Trust and Electronic Commerce

Online Consumer Protection

- The E-Commerce Agreement requires parties to put in place legal frameworks that protect online consumers from misleading, fraudulent, and deceptive commercial activities. It also promotes access to and awareness of consumer redress or recourse mechanisms.

Unsolicited Commercial Electronic Messages

- The E-Commerce Agreement requires each party to put in place measures to minimize unsolicited commercial electronic messages, such as allowing recipients to opt out from receiving such messages and requiring consent prior to receiving commercial messages or other methods. This provides an important global baseline to ensure that consumers are protected from spam and encourages international cooperation in this space.

Personal Data Protection

- The E-Commerce Agreement locks in a commitment from parties to put in place legal frameworks that provide for the protection of personal data to increase business and consumer trust and confidence

in digital trade. It also encourages compatibility between different data protection regimes to ensure consistently high levels of protection across borders.

Cybersecurity

- The E-Commerce Agreement facilitates cooperation, the development of national cybersecurity capabilities and risk-based approaches to cybersecurity while minimizing trade barriers.

D. Transparency, Cooperation, and Development

Working Together on Digital Trade

- The E-Commerce Agreement provides a framework to facilitate digital trade to unleash its transformative potential for the benefit of people, businesses, workers, and consumers around the world.

Development and Capacity Building

- Inclusion is at the heart of this E-Commerce Agreement. In response to challenges and opportunities faced by developing and least-developed countries (LDC) Members on digital trade, the E-Commerce Agreement provides a broad and practical commitment to inclusivity by prioritising tangible support for their participation. The E-Commerce Agreement contains an effective, multi-avenue approach to supporting them to implement the E-Commerce Agreement, through a combination of implementation periods, needs assessments, capacity building and technical assistance.
- This is complemented by the Capacity Building Framework (CBF) established by the Co-Convenors and Switzerland. The CBF aims to strengthen digital inclusion. With the support of relevant international organisations, the CBF provides targeted needs assessment, technical assistance and capacity building initiatives designed to strengthen regulatory, institutional and digital infrastructure capacities. This enables developing and LDC parties to capitalize on the extensive opportunities presented by digital trade.

E. Telecommunications

- The E-Commerce Agreement builds on existing WTO obligations and commitments to modernize global trade rules governing telecommunications to reflect technological advancements. It encourages parties to assign frequencies through open processes using market-based approaches that underpin competitive markets and provide greater choice to businesses, workers, and consumers.

F. Institutional arrangements and final provisions

- The E-Commerce Agreement sets out a pathway for parties to periodically review commitments to ensure it stays up to date and relevant, and to return to negotiations in the future on issues not addressed in the E-Commerce Agreement.