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MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

**STRENGTHENING THE RULES-BASED TRADING SYSTEM**

NOTING that the global economy is undergoing profound change – marked by heightened geopolitical tensions, trade policy uncertainty, supply chain stresses and rapid technological shifts – and that the multilateral trading system is under unprecedented strain;

ACKNOWLEDGING that without effective, predictable, updated, enforceable and trusted rules, countries – especially small, medium and trade-dependent ones across all stages of development – face greater exposure to volatility, higher costs of participating in global markets, and greater difficulty in leveraging trade as a driver of growth, development and job creation;

RECOGNISING the fundamental importance of the WTO Agreements, the principles on which they are based, including non-discrimination, and their effective implementation as the foundation for market access, predictability, trust and good trade governance, while also recognising that important reforms envisaged in those Agreements remain outstanding and that the WTO has not fully kept pace with evolving economic realities;

RECALLING the establishment of the FIT Partnership as a pathfinder to incubate and test innovative solutions to facilitate trade and investment, and our shared commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system, providing for a predictable, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, and fair global trading environment;

AFFIRMING that the FIT Partnership, through flexible, agile and collaborative approaches, can help generate practical ideas, build momentum, and demonstrate workable models that complement broader multilateral efforts to enhance the global trading system's effectiveness, credibility and responsiveness to WTO Members' evolving needs and interests;

UNDERSCORING the need for pathways that allow for a prompt and final resolution of trade disputes, thereby contributing to the legal certainty and predictability of trade activities, while reiterating our commitment to the reform of the WTO dispute settlement system, building on progress achieved so far; and

DETERMINED to contribute constructively to the 14<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in March 2026, and to advance a longer-term agenda to strengthen the rules-based trading system.

1. We reaffirm our resolve to strengthen the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, so that it remains credible, effective and capable of responding to current trade challenges.
2. We welcome ongoing efforts to pursue deep and urgent reform of the WTO with a view to strengthening all its functions, including through improvements to the decision-making process and enhancing confidence in the WTO's ability to deliver timely and effective outcomes.
3. We affirm our support for plurilateral initiatives at the WTO, which play an important role in advancing concrete progress in key areas of trade. Such initiatives enable pragmatic collaboration among like-minded WTO Members, without affecting the rights and obligations of other WTO Members and remain open to them to join at a later stage.
4. We support the incorporation of the WTO Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA) into the WTO legal architecture and reaffirm our commitment to advancing this objective.
5. We support the incorporation of the WTO E-Commerce Agreement (ECA) into the WTO legal architecture and reaffirm our commitment to advancing this objective.
6. We intend, as a complementary means of supporting the objectives of the IFDA and ECA, to promote provisions consistent with the IFDA and ECA, where appropriate, in other bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements, as a means of realising some practical benefits of these two agreements pending their incorporation into the WTO legal architecture.
7. We support a permanent moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, recognising its importance for keeping cross-border digital flows open, reducing costs for micro, small and medium enterprises, fostering innovation, and enabling broader participation in digital trade and global value chains.
8. We encourage complementary analytical and capacity-building efforts to support WTO Members' digital readiness and participation in the digital economy.
9. We resolve to act in a manner conducive to the prompt and final settlement of trade disputes by not appealing into the void, including by using the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) for appeals in future and current WTO disputes, including those pending before the Appellate Body, consistent with paragraph 9 of the MPIA, as an effective interim pathway that preserves the binding character of dispute settlement and two levels of adjudication pending the completion of dispute settlement reform.
10. We support outreach by FIT Partnership members to other WTO Members to encourage them to participate in and use the MPIA.

11. We affirm our commitment to advance agriculture reform at the WTO in accordance with Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture.
12. We resolve to contribute to a constructive and forward-looking outcome at MC14 that seeks to address the needs and concerns of WTO Members at different levels of economic development.
13. We express our determination to advance, through continued cooperation within the FIT Partnership, a structured programme of work to contribute to a more effective and adaptable rules-based trading system by:
  - a) Exploring approaches to improve decision-making;
  - b) Identifying and addressing, within the WTO reform process in Geneva, gaps in trade rules on outstanding and emerging issues;
  - c) Developing and testing potential pathways for the timely implementation of outcomes of plurilateral initiatives; and
  - d) Engaging external expertise, including academics, businesses and relevant international organisations, where appropriate, to ensure that the FIT Partnership's work is grounded in practical realities.
14. We underscore that the steps outlined in this declaration form part of a longer-term effort within the FIT Partnership to enhance the rules-based trading system's effectiveness, credibility and responsiveness to WTO Members' evolving needs and interests.

Endorsed by the Ministers responsible for international trade of the following countries on 16 March 2026:

**COSTA RICA, ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, PARAGUAY, RWANDA, SINGAPORE, SWITZERLAND, URUGUAY**

Endorsed by the Ministers responsible for international trade of the following countries on 20 March 2026:

**CHILE, MALAYSIA**

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