



RIS
Research and Information System
for Developing Countries
विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

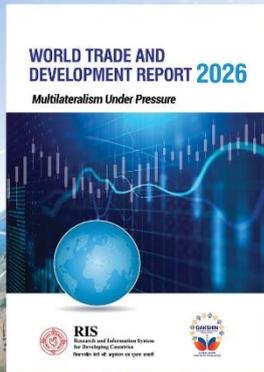


International Conference

Multilateralism Under Pressure

Roadmap to the WTO Ministerial Conference

Saturday, 21 March 2026 | 9:00 am onwards (IST)
Mansingh I & II, Taj Mahal, Man Singh Road, New Delhi



Registration



Launch of the World
Trade and Development
Report 2026

CONCEPT NOTE

Established over four decades ago, the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based think tank pursuing evidence-based research in trade, investment, finance, technology and development cooperation. The institution has a long and distinguished track record of producing rigorous, policy-relevant research on trade and development issues, with a particular focus on the concerns and interests of developing countries and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The multilateral trading system is under immense pressure. Challenges ranging from conflicts and pandemics to climate change and geopolitical contestations have already unhinged a global order in place since the mid-twentieth century. Recent disruptions arising from unilateral reciprocal tariffs and muscular industrial policy actions have made it even more difficult for investors and businesses to fathom opportunities in an uncertain landscape. They need the multilateral trading order to return to a secure and predictable environment and are looking to their governments to craft it. With the negotiation function of the World Trade Organization (WTO) almost stalled and its dispute settlement mechanism dysfunctional, WTO Member countries find themselves in throes of introspection. Reaffirming their commitment to work towards necessary reforms of the WTO to improve all its functions, taking some operational decisions, and adding two new members, the Ministers at the 13th Ministerial Conference held out some promise of action in the near future. They will be meeting again at the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, during 26–29 March 2026. The MC14 arrives at a moment of singular consequence for the

multilateral trading system. The outcome of this Conference will shape the trajectory of global trade governance for years to come.

True to its tradition of producing timely flagship reports ahead of major international trade events, RIS is proud to present the *World Trade and Development Report 2026* (WTDR 2026), a comprehensive analytical contribution prepared in the run-up to MC14. The last World Trade and Development Report of RIS was published in 2021 on *Trade, Technology and Institutions*, focusing on *WTO@25: The Way Forward*. Not much has changed in the architecture of the multilateral trading system since then, but the urgency of retrieving the system from the current abyss cannot be overstated.

The Report is the product of sustained intellectual effort and broad collaborative engagement. It brings together contributions from leading experts, including trade economists, legal scholars, former negotiators, and policy practitioners, who have examined the full range of issues before the WTO with rigour and depth. The chapters cover critical subject areas including WTO reform and dispute settlement reform, food security and agriculture, fisheries subsidies, plurilateral agreements and Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs), industrial policy and its interface with trade rules, the trade and sustainability interface, and Special and Differential Treatment for developing countries. As part of the preparatory process for the Report, RIS organised a series of twelve roundtable discussions in January and February 2026, bringing together serving and former trade negotiators, senior policymakers, academics, and civil society experts to deliberate upon the specific issues on the MC14 agenda. These roundtables served to pool the collective wisdom and expertise of the policy and research community, generating actionable insights and strategic recommendations. The *World Trade and Development Report 2026* is a culmination of these efforts, drawing upon the deliberations, research contributions, and expert inputs that emerged from this sustained process of engagement, and presenting a comprehensive body of knowledge to help India and the Global South navigate the challenges and opportunities of MC14.

An international conference including the launch of the WTDR 2026 is being organised on 21 March 2026 as a full-day event, structured to enable detailed and substantive engagement with its findings and recommendations. The programme brings together a distinguished gathering of policymakers, diplomats, trade experts, academics, and students, and is structured around an Inaugural Session, two substantive panel discussions examining the themes addressed in the Report. These panel discussions will be followed by a session on negotiating strategies at the WTO with authors of books on the subject. RIS is organising a special session with the Delhi School of Economics on Agriculture, Food Security and Subsidies. The conference will conclude with a valedictory session followed by dinner. The event seeks to foster an open and constructive dialogue that can contribute to sharpening the negotiating positions of developing countries and building a broader coalition of informed stakeholders ahead of MC14.