

WTO Reform: Mapping Submissions and the Facilitator's Draft Work Plan

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An Analytical Note on Member Positions Across the Facilitator's Reform Tracks, 8 February 2026

Abstract

This paper maps seven WTO submissions and examines them in light of outputs emerging from the WTO reform process, including the Reform Facilitator's Draft Ministerial Decision and Flexible Post-MC14 Work Plan. Using comparative tables, it reviews Member positions across core reform elements, including overall reform vision, scope and sequencing; decision-making, consensus and governance; plurilaterals and Annex 4; development and Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT); agriculture, industrial policy and level-playing-field issues; dispute settlement; and Secretariat and institutional questions. The paper also distils key observations on the Reform Facilitator's Draft Ministerial Statement and Work Plan, examining how their structure and thematic emphasis align with different Member positions. It notes the relative prominence of EU and US framings across several reform tracks, alongside areas where longstanding developing country concerns, including agriculture, consensus-based decision-making, and treaty-based S&DT, are less explicitly reflected.

A. Introduction

This paper maps six formal WTO reform submissions: the African Group (WT/GC/W/971), ACP Group (WT/GC/W/975), LDC Group (WT/GC/W/979), United States (WT/GC/W/984), Paraguay (WT/GC/W/987) and the European Union (WT/GC/W/986), and draws on India's Investment Facilitation for Development submission (WT/GC/W/982) for issues relating to plurilaterals, decision-making and institutional matters. In addition, the paper examines outputs emerging from the WTO reform process, including the WTO Reform Facilitator's Draft Ministerial Decision and accompanying Work Plan dated 3 February 2026, and considers how Member positions are reflected in the Facilitator-led process. The paper serves as a reference for WTO reform discussions.

B. Key observations on the Facilitator's draft Ministerial statement and Work Plan in light of Member submissions

1. Agenda and structure follow EU/US framing

The Facilitator's Work Plan adopts three core tracks: decision-making, development and S&DT, and level-playing-field (LPF) issues, plus dispute settlement (DS) and an "other issues of our time" basket. This mirrors the broad reform agenda and thematic clustering proposed by the EU and the US, rather than the narrower, mandate-consolidating approach favoured by African, ACP, LDC and Paraguay submissions.

2. Decision-making track reflects flexibility and plurilaterals, not a firm defence of consensus

The decision-making track aims to "improve efficiency," clarify "flexibility tools" and "facilitate the integration of plurilateral outcomes." This aligns with EU and US calls for more flexible decision-making and easier use of plurilaterals and does not reflect the stronger defence of strict consensus and warnings against small decision-making bodies found in African, ACP, LDC Groups, Paraguay and India submissions.

3. Development and S&DT track borrows “targeted, evidence-based” language

The Work Plan frames S&DT reform around making it “precise, effective, operational, targeted and evidence-based” and around compiling data on usage and effectiveness. This vocabulary and orientation are close to EU, US and Paraguay preferences for more granular, criteria-based S&DT, and ignores that S&DT is a treaty-based right that should not be eroded as indicated in the African, ACP and LDC submissions.

4. Level-playing-field track embodies EU/US priorities; agriculture is not referenced

Creating a dedicated “Level Playing Field Issues” track, focused on transparency, notification and assessment of disciplines to address “distortions, harm and spillovers” while maintaining some development flexibility, closely reflects EU and US concerns on industrial subsidies, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and non-market policies. The longstanding agriculture asymmetries highlighted by African, ACP, LDC and Paraguay submissions do not appear explicitly in the Work Plan’s description of this track.

5. Dispute settlement is recognised but kept deliberately open-ended

The Work Plan acknowledges “fundamental concerns” with the DS system and calls for consultations to resume under the DSB after MC14, without specifying content or timelines in the way the other tracks do. This minimalist formulation accommodates the broad restoration demand from African, ACP, LDC, Paraguay and EU submissions and the US position to renegotiate key aspects, but it does not clearly lean toward either side and avoids locking in early commitments or structured post-MC14 work.

6. Facilitator-led, track-based process is consolidated, in line with EU preferences

The Work Plan is explicitly “prepared under the responsibility of the WTO Reform Facilitator” and operationalises a facilitator-led, track-based process under the General Council (GC) authority. This matches the process EU supports in its submission and relies on the Facilitator’s earlier report JOB/GC/483 as reference. African, ACP, LDC, Paraguay, US and India demands for stronger GC control, Secretariat neutrality and tighter limits on support for non-mandated Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) are mentioned only indirectly via general references to a “Member-driven, open, transparent, and inclusive” process and by listing “role of the Secretariat” as a possible future topic.

C. Comparative Mapping of Member Positions Across Key Reform Elements

Detailed mappings of each submission against the main reform elements are set out in the tables below:

- Table 1: Overall reform vision, scope and sequencing
- Table 2: Decision-making, consensus and governance
- Table 3: Plurilaterals and Annex 4
- Table 4: Development and Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)
- Table 5: Agriculture, industrial policy and level-playing-field issues
- Table 6: Dispute settlement
- Table 7: Secretariat and institutional issues

Table 1: Overall Reform Vision, Scope and Sequencing

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
Framing of WTO crisis	Systemic challenges rooted in unresolved development asymmetries; reform must restore development centrality and address agriculture, SDT and industrialisation.	WTO must deliver for development, especially smallest and most vulnerable; reform to correct structural imbalances and make the system work for developing and LDC Members.	Focus on restoring trust, preserving LDC-specific rights, sustaining development outcomes, and addressing obstacles to LDC integration.	Institutional credibility at risk if reform proceeds without consensus, fairness and clear attention to agriculture mandates.	WTO at an “existential juncture”; deep and comprehensive reform needed, centred on predictability, fairness and flexibility.	System has overseen severe and sustained imbalances; WTO has limits and cannot solve key systemic problems such as overcapacity, overconcentration and economic security.
Role of MC14	Build on existing mandates, particularly Doha, agriculture and development; avoid open-ended reform that sidelines development and longstanding mandates.	Adopt focused reform guidance rooted in openness, inclusivity, consensus and transparency; support an MC14 outcome that gives a clear, focused work programme on reform.	Provide more precise ministerial guidance on reform while preserving LDC rights, including LDC-specific rules and DS, and addressing LDC participation issues.	Mandate continuation of reform work with timelines, checkpoints and regular reports, but no approval of specific non-consensus texts or topic lists.	Treat MC14 as a Reform Ministerial adopting a forward-looking ministerial decision and detailed post-MC14 work programme up to MC15.	MC14 is useful if it opens space to address plurilateral pathways, SDT eligibility, MFN limitations and Secretariat role; many concerns may also be pursued outside WTO.

Table 2: Decision-making, consensus and governance

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Framing of consensus and decision-making	Strong defence of consensus as cornerstone of sovereign equality; consensus-based decision-making must be preserved and not reinterpreted or undermined.	Consensus has delivered outcomes; the problem lies in exclusion, informality and lack of transparency, not the rule itself.	Supports maintaining Article IX rules “whilst implemented in a manner that builds upon the success in consensus decision making.”	Consensus essential for binding rules; sceptical that decision-making models from other organisations would deliver better outcomes.	Promotes “responsible consensus” and governance evolution; wants to distinguish between procedural and substantive decision-making.	Emphasises that no obligation should be imposed without a Member’s consent but insists willing Members should be able to proceed plurilaterally.	Recalls that negotiations on trade and investment required “explicit consensus” and that such issues were removed from the Doha Work Programme; stresses that new negotiations require a Ministerial decision and Annex 4 additions require consensus under Article X.9.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Treatment of informal processes and small groups	Stresses fairness, inclusivity and development-centred reform; implicitly wary of processes that marginalise African Members.	Warns against informal or selective processes that undermine multilateralism; calls for GC oversight and holistic reform debates.	Calls for listening rooms, time to consult capitals and better access to documents to ensure LDC participation in small-group settings.	Warns that small decision-making bodies would benefit large delegations and undermine legitimacy; says small groups must have transparency mechanisms.	Favors a smaller steering or consultative body under the GC to facilitate decision-making.	Frustrated with inability to conclude agreements; favours formats allowing willing Members to deepen commitments together.	Notes that JSIs like IFD are proceeding without multilateral mandates and raises concerns about how decisions on new issues are taken and implemented.
Approach to plurilaterals in relation to consensus	Emphasises preserving multilateralism and consensus; wary that reform not introduce new forms of exclusion.	For Annex 4 additions, sets tests including Article X.9 consensus; warns against undermining multilateralism.	Does not focus on plurilaterals; emphasises LDC inclusion in agenda-setting and decision-making	Says plurilaterals must not undermine multilateral efforts; calls for rules on thresholds, competing initiatives and institutional integration.	Advocates variable geometry, including MFN-based plurilaterals and club approaches; wants non-participants not to be able to block MFN plurilaterals.	Sees plurilaterals as likely future of WTO negotiations, with benefits and obligations limited to consenting parties.	Argues IFD is not a “trade agreement” under Article X.9 and that JSIs cannot be used to re-introduce issues dropped from Doha; insists on multilateral mandates for new subjects.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Underlines the need for strong General Council control over the reform process and for other formats to be tightly framed, inclusive, and subordinate to GC authority.	Supports arguments that reform of decision-making should strengthen inclusiveness and transparency rather than dilute consensus; useful for challenging any narrative that consensus is the main obstacle.	Provides concrete procedural benchmarks (documents, listening rooms, time to consult) that can be used to operationalise “inclusive and transparent” processes.	Shows that concerns about preserving consensus and resisting small decision-making bodies are shared beyond Africa/LDCs; broadens the coalition defending consensus.	Opens debate on limiting de facto vetoes and using steering structures; developing countries may wish to define clear safeguards and limits if such ideas enter MC14 language.	Signals a shift towards plurilateral pathways under WTO; developing-country coalitions may seek assurances that multilateralism and consensus on rule-making remain central.	Offers legal arguments for insisting that new issues and Annex 4 additions be subject to explicit multilateral mandates and consensus, which can be relevant in reform and JSI debates.

Table 3: Plurilaterals and Annex 4

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Overall stance on plurilaterals	Emphasises multilateralism and development-centred reform; cautious toward approaches that could entrench asymmetries or exclusion.	Cautious and conditional; concerned about structural integrity of multilateralism.	Focuses on multilateral mandates on LDC issues; does not develop a separate plurilateral doctrine.	Accepts plurilaterals in principle but insists they must not undermine or substitute for multilateral negotiations.	Strongly supportive of variable geometry and plurilateral approaches as part of a flexible future WTO.	Sees plurilaterals as central to WTO's future negotiating function.	Opposed to IFD as an Annex 4 agreement; treats JSIs on investment as outside WTO's legitimate negotiating remit absent explicit mandate.
Conditions for Annex 4 / JSIs	No specific Annex 4 conditions; emphasises that reform must not become a vehicle for entrenching asymmetries.	Sets clear tests for Annex 4: Marrakesh principles, lessons from existing Annex 4 agreements, structural integrity of multilateralism, Article X.9 consensus.	Not focused on Annex 4; more concerned with preserving LDC rules and mandates.	Calls for clarity on how plurilateral outcomes are to be incorporated into WTO, including institutional mechanisms.	Favors making it easier for groups of Members to move ahead; open to plurilaterals and different types of club arrangements	Wants a path for plurilaterals inside WTO where obligations and benefits are limited to participants; not primarily focused on Annex 4 procedures.	Argues IFD is not a "trade agreement" under Article X.9; recalls Doha and GC decisions that removed trade and investment from WTO work; stresses that only "parties" in the VCLT sense can request Annex 4 insertion.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Relationship to Doha mandates	Emphasises that reform must build on Doha Development Agenda, not displace it.	Reaffirms Doha as the only multilateral development-focused negotiating framework; wary of fragmentation.	Highlights need to implement existing LDC mandates from MC12 and MC13, including graduation, services preferences, DFQF and S&DT proposals.	Stresses that institutional reform should not be used to include new substantive issues without consensus or to circumvent existing mandates (e.g. agriculture).	Advocates broader debate on balance of rights and obligations beyond Doha, including MFN–reciprocity linkages.	Emphasises that, without specifically referring to Doha, the reform agenda must move beyond existing mandates to tackle systemic problems such as imbalances, overcapacity, economic security and supply-chain resilience, rather than treating earlier mandates as the main reference point.	Directly invokes Doha and 2004 GC decision as a negative mandate on trade and investment; argues that IFD overlaps issues removed from Doha Work Programme.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Reinforces preference for multilateral, mandate-based negotiations; supports caution toward formalising new forms of exclusion.	Provides a treaty-based checklist that can be used to assess any proposal to insert JSIs into Annex 4 or otherwise integrate them institutionally.	Underlines that, for LDCs, plurilateral work must not crowd out efforts on LDC-specific mandates; strengthens case for sequencing.	Offers an institutional lens for managing plurilaterals so they do not displace multilateral trade-offs, especially on agriculture and development issues.	Pushes toward more formal recognition of plurilaterals; developing Members may want clear safeguards to ensure these do not undermine multilateral decision-making or development mandates.	Encourages use of plurilateral formats under WTO; underscores importance of clarifying legal limits and conditions from the perspective of developing countries.	Supplies legal arguments and historical record to contest any move to treat IFD or similar JSIs as “Annex 4 ready,” and to link plurilateral debates explicitly to Doha decisions.

Table 4: Development, SDT and differentiation

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
View of development	Development-centred reform linked to industrialisation, food security and poverty reduction; development justice as core principle.	Marrakesh preamble and development objectives must guide reform; aims to improve how system delivers for developing and LDC Members.	Emphasises preserving LDC-specific rules and supporting LDC integration and resilience in face of multiple crises.	Links development to fairness, especially in agriculture, and to Paraguay's status as an open, middle-income, land-locked developing country.	Recognises that developing countries have had diverse experiences; stresses fact-based analysis of development outcomes.	Focuses on how SDT and differential treatment for "significant players" undermine the legitimacy of rules; less emphasis on development as an end in itself.
SDT position	SDT must be preserved and strengthened; flexibilities should be more precise, effective and operational.	SDT is a treaty-based right; must be precise, effective, operational and accompanied by capacity building and Aid for Trade.	Insists development and SDT "must not be undermined"; fundamental LDC rules must be preserved.	SDT necessary but current self-classification without criteria blocks negotiations; SDT should be needs-based, precise, effective and operational.	Sees SDT as a tool to help developing Members, especially LDCs, ultimately reach same rules; prefers targeted and possibly time-bound SDT.	Wants SDT eligibility reformed; accepts SDT for LDCs and perhaps others but rejects broad, open-ended SDT for self-declared developing countries.
Approach to differentiating Members	Proposes a WTO development index to guide differentiation and allocation of obligations.	Points to existing examples of differentiation (TFA, ASCM 27.4, AoA, TRIPS 31bis, GATS) and supports voluntary opt-outs by some developing Members.	Focuses on preserving the LDC category, including post-graduation support and lighter implementation burdens.	Supports objective criteria and graduation to better reflect differing needs and capacities among developing Members.	Advocates granular, objective and transparent differentiation among developing countries, drawing on other institutions' practices.	Favors narrow eligibility and stronger differentiation; SDT should transition Members to full commitments; critical of self-designation.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Positions Africa as a demandeur for a more structured, data-informed system that preserves strong flexibilities. SDT would be strengthened and made more precise and operational, but always with the explicit purpose of safeguarding food security, policy space, industrialisation and diversification for developing countries and LDCs.	Reinforces that reform on development and SDT should focus on making existing treaty-based flexibilities truly usable and effective for developing and LDC Members, rather than narrowing them or re-opening principles already agreed.	Sets a clear baseline for LDC treatment and helps protect LDC-specific rights from becoming collateral in a broader SDT reform debate.	Signals that some developing Members favour more granular differentiation; this aligns with EU/US concerns.	Points toward more conditional, possibly time-limited SDT for many developing Members; underscores the importance of data and evidence in future negotiations.	Signals strong pressure to narrow SDT eligibility and treat SDT as a temporary tool to transition all Members to the same rules. 'Reverse' SDT is important in this context to review WTO rules, and the special treatment developed countries benefit from.

Table 5: Agriculture, Industrial Policy and Level Playing Field

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
Agriculture focus	Agriculture reform is central; calls for disciplining trade-distorting domestic support in developed countries and removing market access barriers.	Seeks to correct Uruguay Round imbalances in agriculture subsidies and other areas; calls for equitable obligations under AoA.	Stresses core agriculture mandates (domestic support, cotton, SSM, PSH) and food security, including NFIDCs.	Treats agriculture as core fairness issue; stresses uneven treatment between agricultural and non-agricultural products.	Treats agriculture as one element within broader structural imbalances; main focus is cross-sectoral.	Mentions agriculture within broader critique of non-market distortions; main examples concern industrial sectors.
Industrial policy / policy space	Advocates policy space for industrialisation, structural transformation, diversification, technology upgrading and local content.	Calls for sufficient space to enable industrialisation and structural transformation.	Emphasises development constraints and vulnerability to others' policies, including in fisheries and climate-related trade measures.	Less explicit beyond agriculture; focus remains on state support and protection in agriculture.	Seeks stronger disciplines on industrial subsidies and state interventions, while recognising some need for policy space in a balanced way.	Wants more effective tools against non-market policies and overcapacity; defends use of measures for economic security and supply-chain resilience.
Fairness lens	Fairness means correcting systemic asymmetries in agriculture and market access and ensuring WTO rules do not constrain legitimate development tools.	Fairness is enabling participation without disproportionate obligations and correcting structural imbalances in existing agreements.	Fairness emphasises food security, livelihoods and equitable treatment of LDCs in agriculture and fisheries.	Fairness is removing the most trade-distorting agriculture support and protection before redefining other rules.	Fairness is framed as a "level playing field" with reduced spillovers from state interventions and more reciprocity in openness.	Fairness is reciprocity and the ability of market-oriented economies to defend themselves against non-market practices and chronic surpluses.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Provides a strong basis to insist that any “level playing field” work explicitly address agriculture asymmetries and reform rules affecting industrial development.	Supports a narrative that fairness requires correcting legacy imbalances in agriculture and subsidies before adding new constraints.	Highlights that agriculture and fisheries outcomes must work for LDCs in practice, not only in principle; useful for calibrating flexibilities.	Offers a clear fairness framing that can be used to argue that modernisation without agriculture reform is politically unacceptable to many developing Members.	Suggests a broad, cross-sectoral approach to fairness centred on state interventions and subsidies; developing countries may seek to ensure their development-oriented policies are not equated with “distortions” and reclaim narrative on ASCM/TRIMS/TRIPS reform for developing countries.	Centres the fairness debate on non-market practices of certain Members; developing-country agriculture concerns may need active proposals to feature in any LPF track.

Table 6: Dispute Settlement

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States
Overall DS demand	Calls for restoration of a two-tier, fully functioning DS system accessible to all Members.	Calls for restoration of an independent, binding, fully functional two-tier DS system accessible to Members, especially those with limited resources.	Treats a fully functioning two-tier DS system as a priority; emphasises LDC vulnerability.	Supports a binding DS system that provides predictability and impartial settlement.	States that a reformed WTO must be underpinned by a fully and well-functioning DS system accessible to all Members.	Raises fundamental concerns with the current DS system; wants to address perceived overreach (e.g. Appellate Body, security) before restoration.
Specific features highlighted	Emphasises accessibility and development-oriented outcomes; links DS to development justice.	Emphasises disproportionate harm to developing countries from DS paralysis.	Notes limited protection from LDC peace clause and calls for rapid resumption of DS reform with clear mandate and timeline.	Stresses impartiality, predictability and accessibility.	Links DS reform to wider WTO reform work and to “conditions being right.”	Insists essential security is self-judging; criticises constraints on trade remedies and tools addressing non-market practices.
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Strengthens the case for treating DS restoration as a core development demand rather than a purely systemic concern.	Underlines that DS paralysis has concrete adverse effects for developing Members and should be addressed early in any reform sequence.	Highlights the need for LDC-specific considerations in DS reform (costs, timelines, peace clause effectiveness).	Shows that support for DS restoration comes also from mid-sized developing countries.	Suggests EU will insist on DS restoration, but may link it to other reform elements.	Indicates that DS reform discussions will involve substantive changes that may affect the balance of rights and obligations.

Table 7: Secretariat and Institutional Issues

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
View of WTO as Member-driven	Reform must be Member-driven and reflect needs of all Members; stresses inclusivity and transparency in processes.	Calls for GC oversight and holistic reform under GC; stresses openness, inclusivity and transparency.	Stresses need for LDCs to be included in agenda setting and decision making; calls for better access to documents and meetings.	Emphasises Member-driven nature of WTO and warns against creating new structures with decision-making powers limiting participation.	Supports facilitator-led work under GC authority; sees GC as central oversight body.	Emphasises a Member-led organisation and criticises Secretariat initiatives that are not clearly Member-mandated.	Highlights that incorporation of new subjects and agreements (like IFD) implicates how decisions are taken and implemented under WTO rules, not just States' freedom to conclude treaties.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Role and neutrality of Secretariat	Calls for inclusive, transparent and participatory processes.	Emphasises transparency of deliberations and documentation; implicitly expects Secretariat support to serve all Members equally.	Requests updated derestriction procedures and access to documents regardless of contribution status.	Explicitly calls for Secretariat neutrality and impartiality; demands institutional safeguards and budget reforms so Members control resource use; says external relations must reflect Members' will.	Comfortable with an active facilitation role, as long as it is under GC and Member authority.	Criticises Secretariat for agenda-setting, advocacy, monitoring and research beyond mandates; calls for transparency and fiscal discipline.	Raises concerns that WTO resources and Secretariat support are being used for JSIs without mandate; argues this diverts attention and resources from mandated issues.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Use of WTO resources for JSIs / reform	Not specifically focused on JSIs; more concerned with ensuring reform serves development and does not entrench asymmetries.	No explicit reference to JSIs; calls for documentation and processes to be accessible to all.	Not focused on Secretariat support to JSIs; emphasises capacity constraints and access issues.	Warns against new structures that favour large delegations; concerns extend to how Secretariat supports different processes.	Supports the Facilitator and uses JOB/GC/483 as basis; concurs with a structured reform Work Plan.	Explicitly critical of Secretariat support for certain activities without adequate Member control; relevant to JSIs and reform work.	Directly argues that JSIs like IFD are using WTO resources without membership mandate and that this is inconsistent with WTO's core principles and priorities.

Element	African Group	ACP Group	LDC Group	Paraguay	EU	United States	India
Implications for developing countries (analysis)	Underlines the need for strong GC control over the reform process and careful design of alternative formats to prevent exclusion.	Provides a strong basis for insisting that reform remain under GC oversight and that documentation be systematically available to all Members.	Offers concrete procedural requests (derestriction, document access, meeting formats) that can make “inclusive” processes meaningful for LDCs.	Supplies language for Members concerned with Secretariat neutrality and lack of transparency on budgetary issues, to review conduct, which can be inserted into institutional paragraph/ outcome document for MC14.	It can reasonably be inferred from the close alignment between the EU submission and the draft Work Plan that the EU is working closely with the Facilitator to support a facilitator-led process and framing; developing Members may therefore wish to ensure that facilitator reports are clearly treated as non-consensual and remain fully subject to Member approval.	Aligns with developing-country concerns about Member control over Secretariat activities; can be used to argue for clearer safeguards and limits on the role of the Secretariat.	Provides detailed legal and systemic arguments to review Secretariat role in non-mandated work and to improve transparency on WTO voluntary contributions and resource allocation.

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