

**MC13 DELIVERS MILESTONES: CONTINUED EXEMPTION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES ON ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSIONS, DISPUTE SETTLEMENT PROGRESS, NEW MEMBERS AND FINALISATION OF IFD AGREEMENT**

1 Minister for Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong represented Singapore at the 13<sup>th</sup> World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC13), in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 25 to 27 February 2024. At MC13, Minister Gan chaired the inaugural Ministerial Conversation on Trade and Sustainable Development.

2 MC13 saw successful outcomes in a few key areas. First, Members agreed to maintain the existing practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the 14<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) or 31 March 2026, whichever is earlier. This will facilitate digital trade by helping businesses, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, to tap on the growth opportunities in the digital economy. Second, Members agreed to accelerate discussions on the restoration of a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system by 2024, which is critical for the functioning of the WTO. Third, Members reached agreement on the review of special and differential treatment provisions for developing and least developed country (LDC) Members as well as a set of transition support measures for LDC Members. Fourth, MC13 saw the entry into force of new disciplines on services domestic regulation which will facilitate services trade by streamlining and simplifying regulatory procedures. Fifth, Members welcomed Comoros and Timor-Leste to the WTO. Singapore enjoys warm economic relations with both and looks forward to deepening our cooperation for mutual growth and shared benefits.

3 MC13 also saw the finalisation of the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement with support from over 120 Members, which will continue to be discussed at the WTO General Council in Geneva. Singapore remains firmly committed to working towards the early entry into force of the IFD Agreement.

4 Minister Gan said, “Singapore has always been a strong supporter of the rules-based multilateral trading system. Members need to continue to work together to exercise collective leadership and set a forward-looking agenda for the WTO, to ensure that it remains relevant and fit-for-purpose. The work at the WTO does not end here at MC13, and we must press on to ensure that the WTO continues to deliver meaningful outcomes for all.”

5 On the sidelines of MC13, Minister Gan also participated in the meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, the Ottawa Group Ministerial Meeting and a Ministerial Event on the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on IFD. He met many ministerial counterparts to discuss key issues, including areas of bilateral cooperation such as in the green and digital economies, as well as ways to advance the rules-based multilateral trading system.

6 Further information on MC13 and the outcomes can be found [here](#).

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