

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: ____/2026

Date: 26th February 2026

Venue: Maputo, Mozambique

Ministers of Trade Adopt a Common Position in Maputo Ahead of Fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference



MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE: H.E. Mrs. Francisca TATCHOUOP BELOBE, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (ETTİM) of the African Union Commission, participated in the Consultative Meeting of African Ministers responsible for Trade, convened in Maputo, Republic of Mozambique, from 24 to 26 February 2026. The Meeting was organized to consolidate and politically anchor the African Common Position ahead of the Fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), scheduled to take place in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon, from 26 to 29 March 2026.

The Meeting which was convened by the Government of the Republic of Mozambique in its capacity as Coordinator of the African Group in Geneva, with the support of the African Union Commission and the AU Permanent Representation Office in Geneva, had 27 of the 44 African Union members states who are members of WTO participated, alongside representatives of Regional Economic Communities, the AfCFTA Secretariat, the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), the United Nations

Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the WTO Secretariat. MC14 will mark only the second time in the WTO's history that a Ministerial Conference is held on African soil, following MC10 in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2015.

The Meeting was formally inaugurated by H.E. Maria Benvinda LEVI, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, with remarks further delivered by H.E. Basílio Zefanias Muhate, Minister of Economy of Mozambique; H.E Francisca TATCHOUOP BELOBE, Commissioner for ETTIM, Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat; and Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organization. In her remarks, Commissioner. Mrs. Francisca TATCHOUOP BELOBE underscored the imperative for the WTO reform to effectively support Africa's development priorities, industrialization imperatives, and food security concerns.

Deliberations were structured around the six priority issues identified by the African Group for MC14: WTO Reform and the restoration of a fully functional, two-tier, binding dispute settlement system; Development and Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT); Agriculture, encompassing food security, public stockholding, and the cotton file; Electronic Commerce and the development dimension of digital trade; LDC Graduation and smooth transition mechanisms; and the longstanding demand for the African Union's permanent Observer Status at the WTO.

The principal outcome of the Meeting was the adoption of the Maputo Ministerial Declaration, which is Africa's consolidated Common Position for MC14 which showcases the continent's unified, development-centered engagement with the multilateral trading system, grounded in the vision of Agenda 2063.

The Declaration calls for comprehensive, member-driven, inclusive, and development-oriented WTO reform that restores balance across the three core functions of the Organization: negotiation, monitoring, and dispute settlement.



On the margins of the Meeting, Commissioner. Mrs. Francisca TATCHOUOP BELOBE conducted bilateral consultations with H.E. Moustoifa Hassani Mohammed, Minister of Economy, Industry and Investments of the Union of Comoros, and with H.E. Zenaba Gninga Chaning, Minister of Entrepreneurship, Trade and SMEs/SMIs of

the Gabonese Republic. During these engagements, the Commissioner formally advocated for the ratification and operationalization of AU instruments, including the African Financial Institutions (AUFIs) and the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC). Both Ministers conveyed their governments' unambiguous support for the implementation of these continental frameworks.

Building on the outcomes of the Maputo Meeting, the African Union Commission will intensify its technical and political support to Member States ahead of MC14, including the provision of consolidated negotiating briefs and structured consultation mechanisms throughout the Conference. The outcomes of the Maputo Meeting and the Ministerial Declaration will be formally tabled before the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals and will inform Africa's engagement in the G20 Trade Track.

The Commission further reaffirms its commitment to intensifying advocacy efforts for the granting of permanent Observer Status to the African Union at the WTO, an institutional reform that would enable the AU Commission to formally coordinate Africa's collective trade interests and strengthen coherence between multilateral and continental trade agendas anchored in the AfCFTA framework.

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