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CSI Statement on WTO's Failure to Renew the Duty Ban on Digital Trade at the 14th Trade Ministerial

Washington, D.C. (March 31, 2026) – “We are gravely disappointed and concerned by the WTO’s inability to reach consensus in Cameroon to implement a lasting duty ban for electronic transmissions,” said CSI President Christine Bliss. “It is extremely unfortunate that two countries were able to derail a compromise that was endorsed by the rest of the WTO membership.”

Bliss applauded the intensive efforts of US negotiators leading up to and during the conference, as well as support from co-sponsors of the US proposal for a permanent moratorium. She noted the proposal had enjoyed significant momentum and overwhelming private sector support heading into the meeting. She also commended the efforts of the European Union to work with the US and other co-sponsors.

Bliss endorsed U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer’s call for like-minded countries to commit to supporting a permanent moratorium.

In the interim, before a General Council meeting in May where the issue will be considered anew, Bliss also called for an intensified effort to secure a moratorium extension along the lines proposed in the Yaoundé package. In the lead-up to further negotiations on the issue, Bliss urged WTO members to continue to refrain from imposing duties on electronic transmissions. She added, “Failing to renew the moratorium in Geneva would deal a further blow to the WTO’s credibility and effectiveness.”

Bliss noted that heading into the ministerial, strong support for a permanent moratorium reflected the broadly shared understanding that duty-free cross-border digital trade is now a cornerstone of the global economy. During the meeting, 66 WTO members pledged to implement the WTO E-Commerce Agreement, which includes a commitment for a permanent moratorium.

CSI is the leading U.S. industry association devoted to promoting the trade policy priorities of the U.S. services sector on services and digital issues. Our members include companies that provide financial services, information and communication technology services, telecom services, express delivery and logistics, media and entertainment, distribution, and professional services to all sectors of the economy, including manufacturing and agriculture. CSI members include manufacturers of consumer electronics, telecommunications equipment and health and nutrition products. Our members operate in all 50 states and in nearly 200 countries, representing both large and small firms. CSI also works with counterpart organizations around the globe as co-chair of the Global Services Coalition and the Asia Pacific Services Coalition.