FAIRGAZE PRESENTS

FREEVOICE MUN 2.0

Online Edition

BACKGROUND GUIDE

World Trade Organization

WTO

AGENDA

Reconstructing the Rules-Based Trading Order: Reforming WTO Dispute Settlement and Trade Rules in an Era of Unilateral Tariffs, Strategic Subsidies and Geoeconomic Fragmentation

4 November 2026 · Online

Open to students of Grade 6 and above

For the use of delegates only. This is not an official United Nations document.

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Contents

Letter from the Executive Board....4

Part I: Understanding Model United Nations....5

1. What is a Model United Nations?....5
2. The United Nations in Brief....5
3. The World Trade Organization....6

Part II: Rules of Procedure....7

4. The Flow of Committee....7
5. Stages of Debate....7
6. Points and Motions....8
7. Documents of Committee....9
8. How to Write a Resolution....10
9. The Position Paper and Your Opening Speech....10
10. Committee Etiquette, Online....11

Part III: Understanding the Agenda....13

11. Introduction to the Agenda....13
12. Key Terms Explained....13
13. Why the System Is Under Strain....14
14. Historical Timeline....15
15. The Legal Framework....15
16. Reform Proposals on the Table....16
17. Case Studies....16
18. Key Issues for Debate....17
19. Positions of Countries and Blocs....17
20. Questions a Resolution Must Answer....18

Part IV: Research and Preparation....19

21. How to Research the Agenda....19
22. Official Sources and Reference Pointers....19
23. Countries in This Committee....19
24. Glossary....20
25. Delegate Research Worksheet....20
26. References and Further Reading....21

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Guide

This guide is written for delegates who may be attending a Model United Nations (MUN) conference for the very first time. You do not need any previous MUN experience to read it, understand it and do well in committee. Read it in order: Part I explains what an MUN is and how your committee works, Part II teaches the rules you will use on the day, Part III explains the agenda in depth, and Part IV shows you how to research and prepare.

- **Blue boxes** explain an idea in simple words.
- **Gold boxes** are practical tips for delegates.
- **Green boxes** contain key facts and figures you can quote in committee.
- **Red boxes** warn you about common mistakes.

Facts in this guide were checked against United Nations and other official sources available up to mid-2026. This agenda keeps changing, so always confirm the latest developments yourself before 4 November, and quote dated sources ("according to the October 2026 report of…") rather than live totals.

COMMITTEE AT A GLANCE

Item	Details
Conference	FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0, Online Edition
Committee	World Trade Organization (WTO)
Agenda	Reconstructing the Rules-Based Trading Order: Reforming WTO Dispute Settlement and Trade Rules in an Era of Unilateral Tariffs, Strategic Subsidies and Geoeconomic Fragmentation
Delegations	40 WTO members allotted at the conference; each delegation has one vote
Outcome	A resolution (Ministerial Decision) adopted by a simple majority of members present and voting
Date and format	Wednesday, 4 November 2026; one day of online committee sessions on a video-meeting platform. The meeting link and timings are shared in your committee's WhatsApp group.
Who can take part	Students of Grade 6 and above. Registration is free.

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our privilege to welcome you to the World Trade Organization (WTO) at FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0. FreeVoice is built on a simple idea: every voice deserves to be heard. It is free, it is online and it is open to any student from Grade 6 upwards, wherever you live. Whether this is your tenth conference or your first, you belong here, and you will leave a more confident speaker and a sharper thinker.

Our agenda goes to the heart of the global economy: Reconstructing the rules-based trading order, reforming WTO dispute settlement and trade rules in an era of unilateral tariffs, strategic subsidies and geoeconomic fragmentation. The WTO's referee has been missing since 2019. Since 2025 the world has seen the largest tariff increases in almost a century, a global race of industrial subsidies, and trade splitting into rival blocs. In March 2026 ministers met in Yaoundé and could not agree on a way forward.

Your task is to do what the ministers could not: design reforms that the largest economies will accept and that still protect the smallest. Think about law, power and fairness together.

This guide is your starting point, not your finishing line. It explains the rules of procedure, the history of the issue, the law that applies and the positions of different countries. Your task is to go further: to discover what your country believes, why it believes it, and what it would be willing to agree to. The best delegates are not those who speak the loudest, but those who listen carefully, negotiate in good faith and write solutions that others are willing to sign.

Remember that in committee you represent your allotted country, not your personal opinion. You may be asked to defend a position you personally disagree with. That is the real skill of diplomacy, and it is what makes MUN such a valuable experience. Keep your camera on, keep your notes close, and do not be afraid to raise your hand. We look forward to an informed, respectful and lively debate.

With warm regards,
The Executive Board
World Trade Organization (WTO)
FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0

PART I

Understanding Model United Nations

What an MUN is, and how your committee works in the real world

1. What is a Model United Nations?

A Model United Nations is an educational simulation of the United Nations and other international bodies. Each student becomes a **delegate** who represents a country (called a **portfolio**) in a committee. Delegates research their country's views, give speeches, debate, form alliances, negotiate and finally write and vote on a **resolution**, the formal document in which the committee records what it has agreed, just as real diplomats do in New York, Geneva and Nairobi.

MUN conferences began in universities in the mid-twentieth century and are now held in schools across the world. In India they have become one of the most respected co-curricular activities, because they build skills that classrooms alone rarely develop: public speaking, research, negotiation, teamwork and clear formal writing.

Who is who in committee

Role	What they do
Delegate	Represents a country. Speaks, negotiates, drafts documents and votes according to that country's policy.
Executive Board (EB)	Chairs the committee: usually a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and a Rapporteur. They keep order, apply the rules, recognise speakers and evaluate delegates.
Secretariat	The FairGaze team that organises the whole conference: the meeting links, schedules, technical help and certificates.
Host / tech support	In this online edition, manages the meeting room: admitting delegates, muting and unmuting, breakout rooms and screen sharing.

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Think of MUN as a mini United Nations on your screen. You are not playing a character in a play; you are doing the real work of a diplomat: understanding a problem, speaking for your country and persuading others to agree on a solution.

2. The United Nations in Brief

The United Nations was founded on 24 October 1945, after the Second World War, when its Charter entered into force. Its purposes, set out in Article 1 of the Charter, are to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, and to achieve international co-operation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights. Today it has 193 Member States. The Charter created six principal organs:

Principal organ	In one line
General Assembly	Every Member State, one vote each; discusses any issue and makes recommendations.
Security Council	15 members, 5 of them permanent with a veto; the only organ whose decisions bind all States.

Principal organ	In one line
Economic and Social Council	Co-ordinates the UN's economic, social and environmental work and its agencies.
Trusteeship Council	Supervised territories on their way to independence; inactive since 1994.
International Court of Justice	The UN's court in The Hague; settles legal disputes between States.
Secretariat	The UN staff, led by the Secretary-General, who carry out the Organization's day-to-day work.

The World Trade Organization is not one of the six principal organs, and it is not formally a UN specialised agency. It is an independent international organization based in Geneva that works closely with the UN system, including UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre. In MUN, the WTO is simulated like a UN body, with speeches, caucuses and a resolution.

3. The World Trade Organization

The WTO was created by the **Marrakesh Agreement** and began work on **1 January 1995**, replacing the provisional GATT system of 1947. It is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. It has 166 members, which include countries and separate customs territories such as Hong Kong, China and the European Union.

The WTO does three main things: it is a **forum for negotiating** trade agreements; it **administers** those agreements and monitors members' trade policies; and it **settles disputes** between members. Its highest body is the **Ministerial Conference**, which meets about every two years. Between conferences, the **General Council** of ambassadors in Geneva takes decisions. The WTO is led by a Director-General, currently Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria.

In the real WTO, decisions are normally taken by **consensus**: a decision is adopted when no member present formally objects. This means every member, large or small, has an effective veto. To give every delegate a vote, FreeVoice MUN 2.0 adopts outcomes by majority, but strong resolutions will still try to win the widest support.

What WTO can do	What WTO cannot do
Negotiate and agree new trade rules among members	Force a member to change its tariffs; it can only authorise the winning side in a dispute to retaliate
Monitor and publish members' trade measures	Impose sanctions for non-trade reasons or deploy any force
Settle disputes through panels (and arbitration under the MPIA)	Hear appeals through the Appellate Body, which has not worked since 2019
Grant waivers and flexibilities, including for developing countries	Bind countries that are not WTO members
Provide technical assistance and Aid for Trade with partners	Directly fund national budgets or industries

DELEGATE TIP: STAY WITHIN THE MANDATE

A WTO resolution should speak in the language of trade rules: 'urges members to notify', 'decides to establish a work programme', 'instructs the General Council', 'calls upon members to refrain from'. It should not 'condemn' a country or 'impose sanctions', which are not WTO tools.

PART II

Rules of Procedure

How debate is run at FreeVoice MUN 2.0, online

Every MUN committee follows rules of procedure so that debate is fair and orderly. The rules below are those commonly used at school conferences in India, adapted for an online committee. The Executive Board may interpret or adjust them where needed, and its decision is final.

4. The Flow of Committee

Most committee sessions follow the order shown below. Do not worry about memorising it now: the Executive Board will guide the committee through each stage.



Figure 1. The usual flow of a WTO session, from roll call to the final vote.

5. Stages of Debate

5.1 Roll call

At the start of each session the Chair reads out the names of all countries. When your country is called, unmute and reply "Present" or "Present and Voting", then mute again. A delegate who says "Present and Voting" gives up the right to abstain on substantive votes and must vote either for or against. The roll call also establishes **quorum**, the minimum number of delegates needed for the committee to work.

5.2 Setting the agenda

WTO has a single agenda, so a delegate simply raises a motion to set the agenda to the topic in this guide. It passes by a simple majority.

5.3 General Speakers' List (GSL)

The GSL is the backbone of debate. Delegates who wish to speak are added to a list, and each speaks in turn for a set time, usually 60 to 90 seconds. Your first GSL speech is your **opening speech**: it presents your country's position. When no motion is on the floor, debate returns to the GSL. If time remains at the end of a GSL speech, the speaker must **yield** it:

Yield	What happens
Yield to the Chair	The remaining time goes back to the Executive Board. This is the most common yield.
Yield to another delegate	Another delegate uses the remaining time. They cannot yield it again.
Yield to Points of Information	Other delegates may ask the speaker questions about the speech, as many as the time allows.

5.4 Moderated caucus

A moderated caucus is a focused debate on one sub-topic, for example "Restoring a two-tier dispute settlement system". A delegate proposes it with a total time, a time per speaker and a topic. If the motion passes, the Chair calls on speakers one by one. Moderated caucuses keep debate specific and fast-moving.

5.5 Unmoderated caucus

During an unmoderated caucus, formal debate is suspended so that delegates can talk freely, form blocs and write working papers. Online, the Executive Board may open **breakout rooms**, or delegates may use the chat and shared documents as the Board directs. This is where most negotiation happens, so use it well: find allies, share ideas and draft clauses together.

EXAMPLE MOTIONS, EXACTLY AS YOU WOULD SAY THEM

- Moderated caucus: "The delegate of Brazil would like to raise a motion for a moderated caucus of 10 minutes, with 1 minute per speaker, on the topic 'Restoring a two-tier dispute settlement system'."
- Unmoderated caucus: "The delegate of Japan would like to raise a motion for an unmoderated caucus of 15 minutes to begin drafting working papers."

6. Points and Motions

Points are requests a delegate makes to the Chair. **Motions** are proposals that the committee does something, and most are put to a vote. Online, use the **Raise Hand** button (or hold your placard up to the camera, if the Board asks for placards) and wait to be recognised before you unmute.

Point	When to use it	Can it interrupt a speaker?
Point of Personal Privilege	You cannot hear the speaker, your connection has dropped, or you are personally uncomfortable.	Yes, only if it concerns audibility
Point of Order	You believe the rules of procedure have been applied incorrectly.	No
Point of Parliamentary Inquiry	You have a question about the rules or about what is happening in committee.	No
Point of Information	You wish to ask another delegate a question about their speech.	No; only when the speaker yields to points

Motion	What it does	Vote needed
Set the agenda	Begins debate on the agenda topic	Simple majority
Moderated caucus	Focused debate on a sub-topic with set speaking time	Simple majority
Unmoderated caucus	Informal negotiation and drafting time	Simple majority
Extend the caucus	Adds time to the current caucus (usually not more than half the original time)	Simple majority
Introduce a working paper or draft resolution	Presents a document formally to the committee	Simple majority, at the Chair's discretion
Divide the question	Votes on operative clauses separately	Simple majority
Close debate	Ends debate and moves the committee into voting	Two-thirds majority
Suspend the meeting	Pauses committee for a break	Simple majority
Adjourn the meeting	Ends the session or the conference	Simple majority

6.1 Right of Reply

If a delegate's speech insults the national integrity of your country, you may send a written request for a Right of Reply to the Chair. If the Chair grants it, you may respond briefly. A Right of Reply to a Right of Reply is not allowed.

6.2 Chits

Chits are short written notes between delegates or to the Executive Board. In this online edition, chits are sent in the way the Board announces at the start of committee, usually as private messages in the meeting chat. All chits must be in English, relevant to committee and diplomatic in tone; the Board may read them and may count good chits towards your evaluation.

COMMON FIRST-TIMER MISTAKES

- Speaking in the first person ("I think"). Always use the third person: "The delegate of Kenya believes..."
- Giving your personal opinion instead of your country's policy.
- Unmuting or interrupting a speaker. Only a Point of Personal Privilege about audibility may interrupt.
- Leaving your camera off, or a display name that does not show your country.
- Quoting a figure without saying where it comes from and how recent it is.

7. Documents of Committee



Figure 2. The life of a resolution in committee.

7.1 Working papers

A working paper is an informal document that sets out a bloc's ideas. It has no fixed format and can include bullet points, tables or proposed clauses. Online, blocs usually write it together in a shared document and send it to the Executive Board, who may share it on screen.

7.2 Draft resolutions

A draft resolution is a formal document written in the format of a real resolution. It needs **sponsors** (the main authors, usually two to five countries, who must support the document) and **signatories** (countries that wish to see it debated but need not agree with all of it). The Executive Board sets the minimum number of signatories. Once approved by the Chair, it is introduced, read out and debated.

7.3 Amendments

An amendment adds, removes or changes an operative clause. A **friendly amendment** is accepted by all sponsors and is added without a vote. An **unfriendly amendment** is not supported by all sponsors and must be voted on. Preambulatory clauses cannot be amended.

7.4 Voting

Once debate is closed, no one may join or leave the meeting until voting ends. Each draft resolution is voted on in the order it was introduced. Delegates vote Yes, No or Abstain (unless they declared "Present and Voting"), by voice, by Raise Hand or by the poll tool the Board opens. A draft passes with a **simple majority of members present and voting**. Abstentions do not count as votes cast. Remember that the real WTO works by consensus, so a resolution that a large group of members opposes would not survive in Geneva.

8. How to Write a Resolution

A resolution is one long sentence. It begins with the name of the committee, continues with **preambulatory clauses** that explain the background and reasons, and ends with **operative clauses** that say what the committee will actually do.

Part	Rules	Example
Heading	Committee, agenda, sponsors and signatories	Committee: WTO; Sponsors: …; Signatories: …
Preambulatory clauses	Begin with an italicised phrase; end with a comma; are not numbered; cannot be amended	Recalling the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes,
Operative clauses	Begin with an underlined verb; are numbered; end with a semicolon; the last ends with a full stop	1. Decides to restore a two-tier dispute settlement system by 2027;

Preambulatory phrases	Operative phrases
Acknowledging, Affirming, Alarmed by, Aware of, Bearing in mind, Concerned by, Convinced, Deeply concerned, Determined, Emphasizing, Expressing concern, Fully aware, Guided by, Having considered, Mindful of, Noting with concern, Observing, Reaffirming, Recalling, Recognizing, Seeking, Stressing, Taking into account, Underlining, Welcoming	Agrees, Calls upon, Decides, Directs, Encourages, Establishes, Instructs the General Council to, Invites, Recommends, Requests the Director-General to, Reaffirms, Stresses, Supports, Urges, Welcomes

Sample clauses on our agenda

The clauses below show the style. They are examples only and do not represent any country's position.

Recalling the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization and the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes,

Deeply concerned that the Appellate Body has been unable to function since 11 December 2019 and that unilateral tariff measures and retaliation have multiplied,

Noting that the Fourteenth Ministerial Conference concluded without a ministerial declaration on reform,

1. Decides to establish a time-bound process under the General Council to restore a fully and well-functioning two-tier dispute settlement system accessible to all members by 2027;

2. Calls upon members to notify all subsidies and trade measures justified on security grounds within 60 days of their adoption;

3. Instructs the General Council to begin negotiations on updated disciplines on industrial subsidies and state-owned enterprises, taking into account the needs of developing and least-developed members.

9. The Position Paper and Your Opening Speech

A **position paper** is a one-page summary of your country's views on the agenda. It shows the Executive Board that you have researched well. If the Organising Committee asks for position papers, it will share the format and deadline in your WhatsApp group. Even if it does not, writing one is the best way to prepare. A strong position paper has four short sections:

1. **Background:** the problem in two or three sentences, in your own words.
2. **International action:** what has already been done, with document names and years.
3. **Your country's policy:** how your country has voted and what it has said, with evidence.

4. **Proposed solutions:** two to four concrete ideas your country would support in a resolution.

A 90-second opening speech

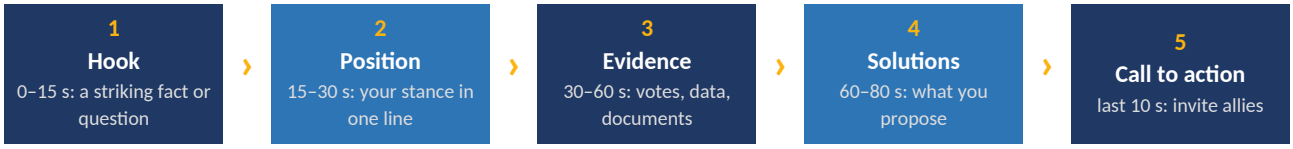


Figure 3. A simple structure for a strong first speech on the GSL.

10. Committee Etiquette, Online

Diplomacy depends on respect. The Executive Board evaluates not only what you say but how you say it.

- Address the Chair as "Honourable Chair" and other delegates as "the delegate of [country]".
- Set your display name to your country and name, for example "Brazil – Aarav", before you join.
- Keep your camera on and your microphone muted unless you have been recognised.
- Use Raise Hand (or your placard) to be recognised. Never speak over another delegate.
- Join ten minutes early from a quiet place with a charged device and a stable connection. If you drop out, rejoin at once and tell the Board in the chat.
- Never criticise another delegate personally. Disagree with a policy, not a person.
- Use formal English. Avoid slang, jokes about other countries and offensive language. Follow any dress code the Organising Committee shares.

Instead of saying...	Say...
"America is bullying everyone."	"The delegate of South Africa is concerned that unilateral tariffs undermine the principle of non-discrimination."
"That makes no sense."	"Could the delegate clarify how this proposal would be enforced?"
"We want lower tariffs."	"The Republic of Indonesia proposes that members commit not to exceed their bound rates."
"Join our group."	"The delegation of Bangladesh invites all like-minded delegations to work on a joint working paper."

Your day in committee

FreeVoice MUN 2.0 runs in a single day. The Executive Board decides the pace, but committees usually move through these stages. Exact timings are shared in your committee's WhatsApp group.

Session	What usually happens	Your goal
Session 1	Roll call, setting the agenda, opening speeches on the GSL, first moderated caucuses	Deliver a clear opening speech and note who agrees with you
Session 2	Moderated and unmoderated caucuses on sub-topics; blocs form and write working papers	Join or lead a bloc and contribute to a working paper
Session 3	Draft resolutions introduced and debated, amendments, closure of debate and voting	Defend your clauses and vote according to your country's policy

HOW DELEGATES ARE USUALLY EVALUATED

- **Research and knowledge:** accurate facts, correct use of documents and a clear understanding of the agenda.
- **Speeches and points:** clarity, structure, confidence and relevance on the GSL and in caucuses.
- **Diplomacy:** staying in your country's policy, building alliances and negotiating respectfully.
- **Documentation:** meaningful contributions to working papers, draft resolutions and amendments.
- **Participation and conduct:** active involvement through every session, punctuality and online etiquette.

PART III

Understanding the Agenda

Dispute settlement, tariffs, subsidies and the future of the WTO

11. Introduction to the Agenda

For three decades, world trade has run on a simple bargain. Members of the World Trade Organization promise to keep their tariffs within agreed limits, to treat all other members equally, and to settle disagreements through a binding **dispute settlement system** instead of trade wars. That system, with its Appellate Body acting as a kind of supreme court for trade, was called the 'crown jewel' of the WTO.

Today the bargain is under strain from three directions at once:

- **Unilateral tariffs.** Since 2018, and especially since April 2025, major economies have imposed tariffs outside the WTO rules, often citing national security or unfair practices, and others have retaliated. Many partners have accepted bilateral deals under pressure.
- **Strategic subsidies.** Governments are spending hundreds of billions of dollars to build domestic industries in semiconductors, electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and steel, through China's industrial policy, the US Inflation Reduction Act and CHIPS Act, the EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan and India's production-linked incentives. The WTO's subsidy rules, written in 1994, struggle to cope.
- **Geoeconomic fragmentation.** Trade is splitting along geopolitical lines, with 'friend-shoring', export controls on advanced chips and critical minerals, and supply chains rebuilt around blocs.

Meanwhile the Appellate Body has been unable to hear appeals since **December 2019**, so a losing member can appeal 'into the void' and avoid any ruling. The Fourteenth Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 2026 ended without a ministerial declaration or a reform work plan, and the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions lapsed for the first time since 1998. Your committee must decide how to rebuild a trading order that every member, from the largest economy to the smallest, can trust.

> **IN SIMPLE WORDS**
>
> Imagine a school league where the referee has quit, the biggest teams make up their own rules and some schools pour money into their teams while others cannot. The WTO is that league's rulebook and referee. This agenda asks how to bring back a fair referee and update the rules so that everyone wants to keep playing.

12. Key Terms Explained

Term	Meaning
Rules-based trading order	A system in which trade follows agreed, predictable rules enforced by a neutral process, rather than power.
Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)	All WTO members meeting to oversee disputes. It establishes panels and adopts reports.
Panel	Three experts who hear a dispute and decide whether a member broke WTO rules.
Appellate Body	A standing body of seven members that heard appeals on points of law. Non-functional since December 2019 because new appointments were blocked.
Appeal into the void	Appealing a panel report when no Appellate Body exists, which prevents the report from being adopted.

Term	Meaning
MPIA	Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement: a stand-in appeal system using WTO arbitration (Art. 25 DSU), joined by 61 members by 2026.
Unilateral tariff	A tariff imposed by one country on its own decision, often above its bound rate and outside WTO procedures.
Strategic / industrial subsidy	Government support (grants, tax credits, cheap loans) to build industries seen as vital for security or the future economy.
Actionable subsidy	Under the SCM Agreement, a subsidy that may be challenged if it causes adverse effects to another member's industry.
Geoeconomic fragmentation	The splitting of the world economy into rival blocs through trade, investment and technology restrictions.
Plurilateral agreement	A deal among a subset of WTO members, such as the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement.
Consensus	WTO decisions are taken when no member present formally objects, which gives every member an effective veto.

13. Why the System Is Under Strain

13.1 The dispute settlement crisis

The United States, under several administrations, blocked appointments to the Appellate Body, arguing that it had overreached by creating obligations members never agreed to, ignored deadlines and treated its rulings as precedent. Others say the Appellate Body simply applied the agreements. Since 2022 members have held reform talks aiming at a 'fully and well-functioning' system, but no agreement has been reached. In the meantime, most new panel reports are appealed into the void, and the MPIA covers only the members who join it.

13.2 Unilateral tariffs and the security exception

GATT Article XXI lets members take measures they consider necessary for their 'essential security interests'. In 2019 (*Russia – Traffic in Transit*) and 2022 (*US – Steel and Aluminium*) panels ruled that the exception is not entirely self-judging. The United States rejects this, saying security is for each nation alone to decide. The tariffs announced in 2025 covered most US trading partners, and many partners negotiated bilateral deals rather than bring cases, which critics say undermines the Most-Favoured-Nation principle.

13.3 Strategic subsidies

The WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) bans export subsidies and subsidies tied to using local rather than imported goods, and lets members challenge other subsidies that harm them. But it says little about state-owned enterprises, cheap state lending or subsidies for green industries, and its notification rules are widely ignored. Competing subsidy races risk over-capacity in steel, solar panels and electric vehicles, and leave developing countries, which cannot afford such spending, behind.

13.4 Fragmentation

The WTO has estimated that splitting the world economy into two rival blocs could reduce long-run global GDP by close to 7 percent, with the largest losses in low-income regions. Export controls on advanced semiconductors and critical minerals, investment screening and 'friend-shoring' are spreading. Members disagree on whether these are legitimate security policies or disguised protectionism.

KEY FACTS

- The WTO has **166 members** covering about 98 percent of world trade.
- The Appellate Body has been unable to hear appeals since **11 December 2019**.
- By MC14 (March 2026), the **MPIA** had grown to **61 members**, covering about 60 percent of world trade.
- MC14 in Yaoundé (26–30 March 2026) ended **without a ministerial declaration**; the e-commerce duty moratorium lapsed on 30 March 2026.
- The share of world trade on MFN terms fell to around **three-quarters** in 2025, according to the WTO, from about 80 percent in earlier years.

14. Historical Timeline

Year	Event
1930	The US Smoot–Hawley Tariff Act triggers retaliation; world trade collapses in the Great Depression.
1947	23 countries sign the GATT.
1995	The WTO begins work on 1 January, with the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) and the Appellate Body.
2001	China joins the WTO; the Doha Development Round is launched.
2016–19	The US blocks the reappointment and appointment of Appellate Body members; the Body loses its quorum on 11 December 2019.
2018	US tariffs on steel, aluminium and Chinese goods; retaliation by China, the EU, India and others.
2020	The MPIA is created by the EU, China and others.
2022	Panels rule against the US steel and aluminium tariffs; the US appeals into the void. MC12 launches dispute settlement reform talks. The US Inflation Reduction Act and CHIPS Act.
2023	The EU adopts an anti-coercion instrument; export controls on advanced chips widen.
2024	MC13 in Abu Dhabi; no agreement on dispute settlement reform.
2025	Sweeping US tariffs announced from April; escalation and truces with China; many bilateral deals. China says it will not seek new special and differential treatment.
Mar 2026	MC14 in Yaoundé ends without a declaration or reform work plan; MPIA expands to 61 members; 66 members begin interim implementation of a plurilateral E-Commerce Agreement.
2026	Reform work continues in Geneva without a ministerial mandate. Check the latest General Council outcomes.

15. The Legal Framework

Rule	What it says	Why it matters for this agenda
GATT Articles I and II	Most-Favoured-Nation treatment; members must not exceed bound tariffs	Country-specific unilateral tariffs breach both unless an exception applies.
GATT Article XXI	Security exceptions	The legal battleground for tariffs and export controls justified by security.
GATT Article XX	General exceptions, including environment and health	Used for green trade measures, which must not be disguised protection.

Rule	What it says	Why it matters for this agenda
SCM Agreement	Prohibited and actionable subsidies; countervailing duties; notifications	Rules on strategic subsidies; many say they need updating.
DSU Articles 3, 17 and 23	Disputes settled through the system; Appellate Body; no unilateral retaliation	Without a functioning Appellate Body, the system's binding force is lost.
DSU Article 25	Arbitration as an alternative means of dispute settlement	The legal basis of the MPIA.
Marrakesh Agreement, Article IX	Decision-making by consensus, with voting as a fallback	Explains why reform is so hard: any member can block.
Enabling Clause (1979) and S&DT	Flexibility for developing countries	Debate over who should benefit in future agreements.

16. Reform Proposals on the Table

- **Restore the Appellate Body with changes**: strict 90-day deadlines, limits on what can be appealed, no precedent, and regular dialogue between members and adjudicators.
- **A two-tier system without a standing appellate body**: panels plus optional appeal arbitration (the MPIA model), open to all members.
- **Clarify the security exception** through an interpretation or a 'peace clause' for genuine security measures, with transparency obligations.
- **Update subsidy rules**: better notification and transparency, disciplines on state-owned enterprises and forced technology transfer, and a green 'box' for climate subsidies.
- **Make decision-making work**: allow plurilaterals to be incorporated more easily, or use majority voting in limited cases.
- **Development dimension**: protect policy space and S&DT for LDCs, and support developing members caught between trading blocs.

17. Case Studies

17.1 US – Steel and Aluminium (DS544 and others)

In December 2022 four panels found that US tariffs on steel and aluminium, imposed in 2018 on security grounds, were not justified under Article XXI. The US called the findings wrong and appealed into the void, so the reports were never adopted and the tariffs stayed. The case shows both the reach of panels and the power of the void.

17.2 The MPIA in action

In *Colombia – Frozen Fries* (2022), brought by the EU, the first MPIA appeal award was issued, and Colombia complied with it. Supporters say it proves appeal can work without the Appellate Body; critics note that the US and India remain outside it.

17.3 The green subsidy race

The US Inflation Reduction Act (2022) offered large tax credits for electric vehicles and clean energy, some linked to North American production. The EU and Korea objected, and the EU responded with its own support plan; China's long-standing support for solar, batteries and electric vehicles led the EU, US, Canada and others to impose duties on Chinese EVs in 2024. Each side accuses the other of unfair subsidies, while few cases reach a final ruling.

17.4 MC14 Yaoundé, 2026

The first ministerial conference held in Central Africa was expected to adopt a reform work plan. Instead it ended without a declaration because members could not reach consensus. Members did make progress outside the full membership, with plurilateral agreements on e-commerce and investment facilitation. Is the future of the WTO plurilateral, and what does that mean for members left out?

18. Key Issues for Debate

1. **Appeal.** Restore a reformed Appellate Body, extend the MPIA to all, or design something new?
2. **Security exceptions.** Who decides whether a tariff or export control is about security, and how can abuse be prevented?
3. **Unilateral tariffs and bilateral deals.** How can MFN be protected when members accept bilateral deals under pressure?
4. **Subsidies.** What should new rules on industrial, green and state-enterprise subsidies look like?
5. **Fragmentation.** How can export controls and friend-shoring be made transparent and limited?
6. **Decision-making.** Should consensus be kept, or should plurilaterals and voting play a bigger role?
7. **Development.** How can LDCs and developing members be protected and supported in a fragmented system?

19. Positions of Countries and Blocs

The positions below are broad tendencies to start your research, not fixed rules. Check recent statements.

Group	Typical position
United States	Says the WTO has failed to deal with non-market economies and over-reaching adjudication; uses tariffs as leverage and prefers bilateral deals; will not restore the Appellate Body as it was; insists security is self-judging.
China	Presents itself as a defender of multilateralism and MFN; opposes unilateral tariffs and export controls aimed at it; MPIA member; resists new disciplines on state-owned enterprises; will not seek new S&DT.
European members (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Sweden)	The EU negotiates as one; founding MPIA member; wants a restored two-tier system, new subsidy rules covering state enterprises, and protection for its green measures; uses its own trade-defence and anti-coercion tools.
Open middle powers (Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, South Korea, Chile, Colombia, Mexico)	Depend on predictable rules; most are MPIA members; push for reform, plurilaterals and regional agreements such as the CPTPP. Japan and Canada have led reform groups.
India	Defends consensus, S&DT and policy space; wants the Appellate Body restored; opposes plurilaterals being folded into the WTO without consensus; is not in the MPIA.
Large emerging economies (Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Türkiye, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines)	Want access and investment, fear being squeezed between blocs, and differ on subsidy rules; Brazil is an MPIA member; Indonesia and South Africa use industrial policy such as export bans on raw minerals.
African and least-developed members (Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan)	Seek S&DT, food security outcomes and help with diversification; Cameroon hosted MC14 for Africa; Bangladesh graduates from LDC status in November 2026.

20. Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. What reformed dispute settlement system should be restored, by when, and with what safeguards?
2. How should the security exception be clarified, and what limits should apply to unilateral tariffs?
3. What new or updated rules should govern strategic subsidies and state-owned enterprises?
4. How can transparency on export controls, subsidies and bilateral deals be improved?
5. How should the WTO take decisions so that reform is possible?
6. How will developing and least-developed members be protected and supported?

PART IV

Research and Preparation

How to turn this guide into a winning position

21. How to Research the Agenda

1. **Understand the agenda.** Read Part III twice. Write the agenda in your own words in one sentence.
2. **Find your country's position.** Search your country's foreign or commerce ministry website, its statements at the UN or other forum, and how it voted on the key documents named in this guide.
3. **Know your allies and opponents.** Look at which bloc your country belongs to (Section 19) and who voted the same way.
4. **Collect evidence.** Pick three to five facts with a source and a date. Quality beats quantity.
5. **Prepare solutions.** Write three or four operative clauses your country would support and that others could accept.
6. **Practise.** Time your opening speech aloud. Prepare answers to the two hardest questions someone could ask you.

A WORD ON SOURCES

Wikipedia, blogs and AI chatbots can help you start, but they are not evidence. Quote the UN document, the official statement or the report itself, and check every figure an AI tool gives you, because such tools often invent numbers and document symbols. The Executive Board may ask for your source.

22. Official Sources and Reference Pointers

Source	What you will find
wto.org	Legal texts, World Trade Statistical Review, trade monitoring reports, each member's tariff profile and dispute cases (search 'DS544' for example).
Your government's commerce or trade ministry	Official trade policy, tariff schedules and free trade agreements.
unctad.org	Reports on trade and development and the effect of tariffs on developing countries.
intracen.org (ITC)	Trade Map and Market Access Map: who exports what to whom, and at what tariff.
worldbank.org / imf.org	World Economic Outlook and Global Economic Prospects, with estimates of the impact of trade tensions.
Reuters, The Hindu BusinessLine, Financial Times	Recent news on tariff announcements and deals (always check the date).

23. Countries in This Committee

These are the 40 delegations allotted in WTO at FreeVoice MUN 2.0. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Denmark and Sweden are members of the European Union, which negotiates as one at the WTO; in this committee each speaks and votes separately but should coordinate with its EU partners.

Delegations			
Argentina	Egypt	Netherlands	South Korea
Australia	France	New Zealand	Spain
Bangladesh	Germany	Nigeria	Sweden
Belgium	India	Norway	Switzerland
Brazil	Indonesia	Pakistan	Thailand
Canada	Italy	Philippines	Türkiye
Chile	Japan	Poland	United Arab Emirates
China	Kenya	Saudi Arabia	United Kingdom
Colombia	Malaysia	Singapore	United States
Denmark	Mexico	South Africa	Vietnam

24. Glossary

Term	Meaning
GATT	The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the 1947 treaty on trade in goods, still in force as GATT 1994.
MPIA	Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement, a stand-in appeal system used by some members since 2020.
Retaliation	A tariff raised in response to another country's tariff.
Supply chain	The network of countries and firms that produce the parts of a finished product.
Trade deficit	When a country imports more than it exports.
CBAM	The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.
Bloc	A group of countries with similar positions that work together in committee.
Quorum	The minimum number of delegates who must be present for the committee to work.
Sponsor / signatory	Sponsors write a draft resolution; signatories only want it debated.

25. Delegate Research Worksheet

Fill this in before the conference and keep it open beside you in committee.

Question	Your notes
Is my country in the MPIA? Has it brought or faced WTO disputes recently?	
Has my country imposed or faced unilateral tariffs, export controls or bilateral deals since 2018?	
Does my country use large industrial or green subsidies? What does it want from new subsidy rules?	

Question	Your notes
Three facts I will quote (with source and date)	
Two operative clauses I want in the resolution	
Countries I will approach first in an unmoderated caucus	

26. References and Further Reading

Documents are listed by their official title and symbol so you can find them in the UN Digital Library or on the organisation's website.

Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (1994), Article IX.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, Articles I, II, XX and XXI.

Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (1994).

Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU), Articles 3, 17, 23 and 25.

Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement pursuant to Article 25 of the DSU, JOB/DSB/1/Add.12 (2020).

WTO panel reports, Russia — Measures Concerning Traffic in Transit (DS512, 2019) and United States — Certain Measures on Steel and Aluminium Products (DS544 and others, 2022).

WTO, MC12 Outcome Document, WT/MIN(22)/24 (2022), paragraph 4 on dispute settlement reform.

WTO, outcomes of the Fourteenth Ministerial Conference, Yaoundé (March 2026).

WTO, World Trade Report 2023: Re-globalization for a secure, inclusive and sustainable future.

WTO, Global Trade Outlook and Statistics (latest edition).

We look forward to seeing you in committee on 4 November.

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