

# India resists US push for permanent ecom duty moratorium

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Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday called for a careful review of the moratorium on Customs duty on ecommerce, citing the lack of a common understanding among World Trade Organization (WTO) member nations on its scope and the potentially significant implications.

“In the absence of a common understanding among members on the scope of the moratorium on Customs duties on electronic transmissions, and given its potentially significant implications, the continued extension of this moratorium warrants careful reconsideration,” Goyal said in a statement on the first day of the four-day 14th WTO ministerial conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The minister said that long-pending mandates from past WTO ministerial conferences should be delivered on priority. For the Global South, a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes, special safeguard mechanisms, and cotton remain mandated issues that need urgent resolution, he said.

Goyal also said India remained committed to negotiating a comprehensive Fisheries Subsidies Agreement balancing current and future fishing needs, protecting the livelihoods of poor fishers, and providing appropriate and effective special and differential treatment.

“A dysfunctional dispute-settlement system has deprived members of effective redress. We must restore the automatic and binding dispute-settlement system. The incorporation of plurilateral outcomes into the WTO framework should be based on consensus and should not impair the existing rights of non-parties or impose additional obligations on them,” Goyal said.

India's position on ecommerce stands in



“GIVEN ITS POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS, THE CONTINUED EXTENSION OF THIS MORATORIUM WARRANTS CAREFUL RECONSIDERATION”

Piyush Goyal  
Union Commerce and Industry Minister

contrast to that of the United States (US), which has urged WTO members to make the moratorium permanent.

“I want to be clear: The US is not interested in another temporary extension of the moratorium. It would not provide our businesses the certainty needed for their operations. It would also further weaken the WTO's standing,” US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a video message.

Greer urged member nations to “seize the opportunity” to make the ecommerce duty moratorium permanent, calling it a legacy-defining issue for both Cameroon as host and the WTO. “The US has made this a priority in our bilateral negotiations over the past year and has made incredible progress. The WTO should capitalise on that,” he said.