

Committee on Trade Concerns Emerges as Second Channel as Regulator Dispute Settlement Caught in Stalemate

A first-ever report by the WTO Secretariat on the resolution of trade concerns related to market access highlights the effectiveness of the organization's committee work in helping members settle their differences without resorting to dispute settlement. The report was presented at a 12-13 October meeting of the WTO's Committee on Market Access (CMA). The committee also reviewed a record 36 trade concerns raised by members at its meeting, eight of which were raised for the first time.

- *A first-ever WTO Secretariat report highlighted the effectiveness of the Committee on Market Access (CMA) in helping members resolve trade concerns through committee discussions rather than formal dispute settlement proceedings.*
- *Of the 145 trade concerns raised between April 1995 and March 2026, 51 (35.2%) were reported as resolved or partially resolved. These included 34 fully resolved and 17 partially resolved concerns, based on information from 16 members.*
- *At its 12–13 October 2026 meeting, the CMA reviewed a record 36 trade concerns, including eight raised for the first time.*
- *The new concerns involved trade-restrictive measures on steel products in Canada and the UK, proposed EU legislation, Indonesia's import requirements, and Türkiye's import surveillance regime.*
- *The WTO Secretariat reported a steady increase in trade concerns, reflecting members' growing use of multilateral discussions to address specific and systemic trade issues. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was frequently cited in discussions on tariffs and quantitative restrictions.*
- *The committee reviewed the alignment of WTO schedules of tariff concessions with successive versions of the Harmonized System (HS), covering HS 1996 through HS 2022.*
- *The World Customs Organization (WCO) agreed to work towards improving the visibility and traceability of menstrual products through more specific tariff classification, helping improve trade monitoring and access.*
- *Members also agreed to consult on proposals to strengthen supply-chain resilience during global trade disruptions and adopted a summary report on making the HS greener.*

- *Australia, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland reaffirmed their support for WTO reform, transparency and the rules-based multilateral trading system amid growing global uncertainty.*
- *The next CMA meeting is scheduled for 10–11 March 2027.*

[<Market Access Report>](#)

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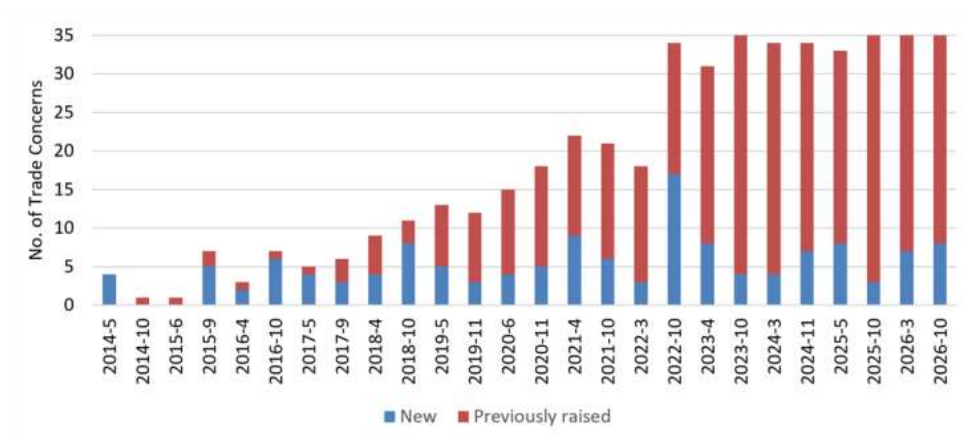
The Secretariat report lists 51 trade concerns raised in the CMA that have been reported as resolved or partially resolved by at least one member raising the concern. This represents 35.2% of the 145 trade concerns raised in the committee between April 1995 and March 2026. Of the 51 trade concerns listed, 34 are recorded as resolved and 17 as partially resolved. These results are based on information provided by 16 members.

The information from the report will also be reflected shortly in the WTO's Trade Concerns Database. At its last meeting in March, the CMA adopted a decision on recording the resolution of trade concerns, under which the Secretariat was directed to maintain a record of all trade concerns raised in the CMA where members have indicated that the concerns have been resolved or partially resolved.

The CMA Chair, Luis Oña-Garcés (Ecuador), invited members that have not yet responded to the request for information about the resolution of concerns, as well as those who have additional information to share, to contact the Secretariat so that information regarding their trade concerns is properly reflected in the database.

Trade concerns

The committee also heard a presentation about a paper by the Secretariat which confirmed that the number of trade concerns in the CMA has been steadily increasing, highlighting the value members attach to discussing specific and systemic trade issues in a multilateral setting (see chart). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was the WTO agreement cited most frequently in these discussions, particularly in relation to tariffs and quantitative restrictions.



Members discussed 36 trade concerns at the meeting, a record for a CMA meeting, of which eight were raised for the first time.

The eight concerns related to trade-restrictive measures on steel products in Canada; alleged discriminatory clauses in the European Union's proposed Industrial Accelerator Act and proposed Cybersecurity Act; Indonesia's import regime for peanuts and pre-shipment inspection requirements for foreign halal products; Türkiye's import surveillance regime based on unit-value thresholds; and the United Kingdom's proposed modification of tariff concessions on steel products as well as trade-restrictive measures on steel products.

The full list of trade concerns discussed during the meeting is available [here](#).

Work related to the Harmonized System

The CMA addressed several matters related to the Harmonized System (HS), a global product classification system widely used for customs matters, including tariffs and trade statistics.

The committee considered seven sub-items related to the transposition of WTO Schedules of Concessions to each of the more recent versions of the HS nomenclature. This concerned the HS1996, HS2002, HS2007, HS2012, HS2017 and HS2022 transposition work and consideration of a Secretariat status report summarizing the overall state of play of the different transposition exercises for each WTO member.

A representative of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat gave an update on recent HS developments, briefing members on:

- the outcomes of the 78th session of the HS Committee, including its consideration of the CMA proposal on menstrual products;
- the HS Committee's role within the WCO's institutional structure; and

- the WCO's technical assistance and capacity-building to help members implement and apply the HS.

Improving and clarifying the tariff classification of menstrual products was one of the topics discussed earlier by the CMA following a thematic session held in January 2026 proposed by Barbados and Canada. Noting the limitations of the HS in this respect, members had agreed to request the WCO to identify more specific tariff codes for menstrual products to enable a closer monitoring of trade in these products and facilitate access to them.

At the meeting, the Chair reported that, at the request of the CMA, the WCO Harmonized System Committee had agreed to work towards improving the visibility and traceability of menstrual products and agreed to consider a specific proposal in that sense later in 2026.

In relation to the other thematic areas being explored in the committee, members:

- adopted an overall summary report on past thematic sessions on "greening" the HS and the linkages to the WTO to serve as a reference document; and
- agreed to hold consultations on a set of possible actions proposed by the United Kingdom about how the CMA could react to a disruption to global trade to ensure supply chain resilience.

Supporting the rules-based multilateral trading system in a changing global economy

Australia, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland once again made statements underlining their strong support for the rules-based multilateral trading system amid rising global uncertainty. The four stressed the importance of transparency, timely notifications and WTO reform, while reaffirming that the WTO remains the central framework for delivering predictability, stability and prosperity in global trade.

Ten delegations took the floor to respond to the statements of the four co-sponsors.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Market Access is scheduled for 10-11 March 2027.