

To,
WTO secretariat,
Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
WTO



Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS)

Date: 21 October 2025

Subject: Protocol agreement securing civil society participation at MC14

We write to you from the network Our World is Not For Sale (OWINFS) to voice our concern about civil society participation at the coming WTO Ministerial in Cameroon (MC14) and seek a guarantee that previous oppressive actions will not be repeated.

Recently, for both the ministerials in Buenos Aires (2017) and in Abu Dhabi (2024), the participation of civil society was extremely restricted and the security of our participants was endangered. In Abu Dhabi, unlike previous ministerial conferences, we could not hold any banners, give away any information, take pictures in public places, or contact the media or delegates. Civil society organisations accredited to the Abu Dhabi Ministerial Conference by the WTO Secretariat were not informed about the extent of these rules, and also other rules were imposed on the spot during the conference (e.g. not contacting media and not taking pictures).

This situation is clearly not sustainable and it is contributing to worsening the image of the WTO as undemocratic and illegitimate.

Therefore, for the coming MC14 it is paramount that in the agreement between the WTO and the host country, in this case Cameroon, there is protocol that secures civil society participation and security.

Such a protocol must ensure that registered civil society participants are able to engage effectively in the ministerial process and that our security is guaranteed. This needs to guarantee, among other activities, that accredited participants from civil society can enter the conference centre (not negotiating rooms), can contact media representatives and delegates, distribute flyers and information, hold peaceful demonstrations (notified to the WTO liaison), take pictures and videos of our actions, and not be searched or detained by local police/guards for undertaking these activities.

On a higher level, such a protocol needs to guarantee the respect of human rights,

including the right of freedom of expression and protection against discrimination. To ensure this, the guards on site need to be working under the auspices of the WTO and to the highest ethical standards.

Such a protocol can be based on the example of the agreement between the UNFCCC secretariat and Azerbaijan ([link here](#)).

Finally, we emphasise that such a protocol agreement is essential and needs to be developed jointly with the civil society, such as the members of OWINFS, who are most directly affected.

A failure to make such an agreement with the host country will make human rights relative and contextual in the hands of the host country and will further damage the reputation and legitimacy of the WTO.

Given the repeated nature of these concerns, we also urge you to make the development of such a protocol agreement an integral part of the WTO reform process.

Sincerely,

Facilitators of the OWINFS network