

## MINI-MINISTERIAL WTO MEET 2025: ECONOMY

**NEWS:** India pushes for WTO reforms at Paris Ministerial, urges action on non-tariff barriers and dispute settlement

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

At the 2025 WTO mini-ministerial in Paris, India proposed a 3-pronged reform agenda—tackling non-tariff barriers, curbing distortions from non-market economies, and reviving the WTO dispute settlement system—while stressing the need to preserve the WTO's developmental role amidst rising global trade fragmentation.

### India's Reform Agenda at the Mini-Ministerial WTO Meet 2025

#### In News

- India raised key concerns and proposed a **3-pronged reform agenda** at a **mini-ministerial WTO meeting in Paris (2025)**.
- The meeting was attended by **25 WTO member nations**.
- Objectives:
  - Strengthen the **multilateral trading system**.
  - Revive **WTO's core functioning**.
  - Protect the **trade interests of developing economies**.

### India's 3-Pronged Reform Agenda

- **1. Tackle Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)**
  - NTBs such as **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures** and **Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)** are increasingly used to **block exports from developing countries**.
  - India seeks:
    - **Stricter oversight** on the use of NTBs.
    - Enhanced **transparency and accountability** of member countries using such barriers.
  - Example:
    - Indian **mangoes** and **basmati rice** frequently face SPS-related rejections in EU and U.S. markets, despite meeting domestic quality standards.
- **2. Curb Non-Market Economy Distortions**

- India wants WTO to address **distortions caused by state-controlled economies**, mainly:
  - Excessive **subsidies**.
  - **Dumping** of underpriced goods.
  - Lack of **market transparency**.
- Countries like **China** often engage in such practices, impacting global trade balance.
- Example:
  - India's **steel** and **solar industries** have faced disruptions due to cheap Chinese imports, leading to imposition of **safeguard duties** and **anti-dumping cases**.
- **3. Revive the Dispute Settlement System**
  - The **WTO Appellate Body** has been paralyzed since **2009** due to a **U.S. blockade of judge appointments**.
  - India emphasizes:
    - Full restoration of a **binding and impartial dispute resolution mechanism**.
    - Urgent reforms to prevent WTO's legal system from becoming irrelevant.
  - Example:
    - India's trade disputes with the U.S. on **steel tariffs** and **ICT product tariffs** remain unresolved due to the appellate body deadlock.

## Relevance of WTO in a Multipolar World

- **Dispute Resolution**
  - WTO mechanisms are vital for **managing trade tensions** among major powers like **India, China, U.S., and EU**.
- **Rule-Making**
  - The WTO plays an essential role in:
    - Regulating emerging sectors such as **e-commerce** and **digital trade**.
- **Level Playing Field**
  - WTO frameworks protect:
    - Interests of **developing nations** from being dominated by advanced economies.

- **Trade Facilitation**

- The WTO helps:
  - Standardize global trade procedures.
  - Promote **smoother and more predictable trade flows**.

### **Need for Structural Change: Why Reform is Inevitable?**

- **Rising Protectionism**

- Recent **U.S.-China trade wars** have led to trade actions bypassing **WTO norms**.

- **Risk of Fragmentation**

- New initiatives like **Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD)**, supported by **128 countries**, lack **broad consensus**.
- India fears that such parallel initiatives may **fragment the global trading system** and **weaken multilateralism**.

- **Pending Agricultural Issues**

- The **permanent solution for public foodgrain stockholding** has been pending since the **Bali Ministerial (2013)**.
- Developing countries, including India, seek urgent resolution to enable **public food programs** without violating WTO limits.

### **Conclusion**

- India's WTO reform agenda reflects a **pragmatic yet principled approach**:
  - Seeks to **preserve the developmental character** of the WTO.
  - Opposes **coercive plurilateralism** that undermines multilateral consensus.
  - Urges modernization of WTO's **core functions** to ensure relevance in the evolving global trade landscape.

Source: <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/india-pushes-for-wto-reforms-at-paris-ministerial-urges-action-on-non-tariff-barriers-and-dispute-settlement/>