Participation in WTO plurilateral talks

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Plurilaterals in the (work among only some members, not the whole membership) are not easy to follow. Some information is publicly available but a lot is confidential. Some of what is available publicly is incomplete, including the identities of the countries participating in the work.

As this piece was being written, a useful new tool was published, the independent "WTO Plurilaterals" website, created by the Geneva Trade Platform. This technical note has therefore been updated to include the website's information.

Finding out how many countries are participating in the plurilateral talks is not straightforward. In some cases there are official lists. For others some detective work is needed.

The bottom line: 149 WTO members (91% of the membership) are participating in at least one plurilateral discussion, 15 (9%) are not.

Clearly participation is fluid, but this note has taken several days to compile. It ought to be straightforward, and non-controversial, for lists to be made public and updated routinely.

The starting point is 'joint statements' issued at the 2017 Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference (in the WT/MIN(17)/ series) — which is why these talks are officially called joint-statement initiatives (JSIs). In some cases, new lists are circulated as official documents, although they are not always kept up-to-date.

Then come countries' announcements that they are joining the talks. Some are public documents, others are secret ("restricted"), and in some cases no official announcement is made at all.

And then there are WTO web pages and website news stories. Some of these have full lists. Others only have numbers. Some have nothing.

The numbers that appear here are the ones that have been confirmed. Participants that have not been announced publicly may have slipped through the net. They are supplemented by information on the independent WTO Plurilaterals website, which does not identify how it has arrived at those lists, but is normally reliable.

Finally, the numbers are further complicated by how the EU and its member states are counted. They are 28 WTO members (the EU plus 27 member states, or 28 up to 2019 before the UK left). But for obscure internal legal reasons, the EU sometimes insists on being counted as 27, the number of its member states. That then raises the question of whether the full WTO membership is 164 or 163.

In this note, the EU is always counted as 28 (or 29 before the UK left). If the EU alone is listed, 27 (or 28 pre-Brexit) is added to the total.

These are the figures for the eight subjects currently being negotiated or discussed as "joint-statement initiatives" (JSIs), the first five launched at the 2017 Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference and the other three launched at the originally scheduled time of the 2021 Geneva Ministerial Conference (November 30 to December 3 2021, now postponed). Sources for the numbers are below:
From 2017 (Buenos Aires)

- E-commerce and digital trade — 90
- Domestic regulation in services — 70
- Investment facilitation for development — 117
- Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) — 94
- Gender equality and women in trade — 116

From 2021 (Geneva)

- Trade and environmental sustainability structured discussions — 75
- Plastics: informal dialogue on plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable trade — 76
- Fossil fuel subsidies — 48

How many in total? 149
Based on all of this, the full list of participants in WTO plurilateral talks is (at least): 149 (91%):

Afghanistan; Albania; Angola; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Austria; Bahrain; Barbados; Belgium; Belize; Benin; Bolivia; Botswana; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Bulgaria; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cambodia; Cameroon; Canada; Central African Republic; Chad; Chile; China; Colombia; Dem. Rep. Congo; Congo; Costa Rica; Côte d’Ivoire; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Estonia; Eswatini; European Union; Fiji; Finland; France; Gabon; Gambia; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Grenada; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; Hong Kong; China; Hungary; Iceland; Indonesia; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Jamaica; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Rep. Korea; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Latvia; Lesotho; Liberia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Macao, China; Madagascar; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Mali; Malta; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mexico; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; Namibia; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Oman; Panama; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Romania; Russia; Rwanda; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Solomon Islands; Spain; Suriname; Sweden; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Tajikistan; Thailand; Togo; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Turkey; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Vanuatu; Vietnam; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe (149)

Sources are here

Not participating in plurilaterals: 15 (9%)
Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Ghana; India, Jordan, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan; South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tunisia, Venezuela (15)

Sources are here
FROM 2017 (Buenos Aires)

**E-commerce: 90**

Not the EU, but its member states participate

2017 ministerial statement: [WT/MIN(17)/60](https://www.wto.org) and [WT/MIN(17)/60/Add.1](https://www.wto.org) (adding Thailand)

Additional documents on new participants: included in [this search result](https://www.wto.org)

**WTO website official page:** 90 (accessed October 31, 2023)
**WTO website news latest:** 90 ([October 27, 2023](https://www.wto.org))
**WTO website news archive**
**See also** [this in a nutshell](https://wto-plurilaterals.org)

Albania; Argentina; Australia; Austria; Bahrain; Kingdom of; Belgium; Benin; Brazil; Brunei; Bulgaria; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Denmark; Ecuador; El Salvador; Estonia; Finland; France; Gambia; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Guatemala; Honduras; Hong Kong; Hungary; Iceland; Indonesia; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Rep. Korea; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malaysia; Malta; Mauritius; Mexico; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Oman; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Romania; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan; Thailand; Türkiye; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay (90)

Sources are here

**Domestic regulation in services: 70**

Including EU + member states ("The European Union presented one schedule for its member states")

List of schedules of 68 commitments [INF/SDR/3/Rev.1](https://www.wto.org) (December 2, 2021)

Additional participants (Georgia and UAE) [WT/L/1129/Add.1](https://www.wto.org) (June 13, 2022)

**WTO website news:** 70 ([December 20, 2022](https://www.wto.org))
**WTO website news archive**
**See also** [this in a nutshell](https://wto-plurilaterals.org), the independent [WTO Plurilaterals website’s list](https://wto-plurilaterals.org)

Albania; Argentina; Australia; Austria; Bahrain; Belgium; Brazil; Bulgaria; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; El Salvador; Estonia; European Union; Finland; France; Georgia*; Germany; Greece; Hong Kong; China; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Rep. Korea; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Mauritius; Mexico; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; Turkey; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates*; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay (70)

* Joined [June 2022](https://www.wto.org)

Sources are here.
**Investment facilitation:** 117

Not US

**Latest official list** (December 10, 2021) [WT/L/1130](111)

**Previous official list** (2019): [WT/L/1072/Rev.1](1)

**Additional documents** on new participants since 2019: [INF/IFD/W/36](Peru, July 2021), [INF/IFD/W/20](Mauritius, June 2020), [INF/IFD/W/14](Philippines, Feb 2020), [INF/IFD/W/49](Oman, April 2023)

**WTO page** on investment facilitation (accessed October 16, 2023) (117)

**WTO news story** October 13, 2023 (117)

**WTO website news archive**

See also [this in a nutshell]( ), the independent [WTO Plurilaterals website's list]( )

Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Australia; Austria; Bahrain; Barbados; Belgium; Benin; Bolivia; Brazil; Bulgaria; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cambodia; Canada; Central African Republic; Chad; Chile; China; Colombia; Congo; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Estonia; European Union; Finland; France; Gabon; Gambia; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Grenada; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Honduras; Hong Kong; Hungary; Iceland; Indonesia; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Rep. Korea; Kuwait; Kyrgyz Republic; Laos; Latvia; Liberia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Macao; Malaysia; Maldives; Malta; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mexico; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Morocco; Myanmar; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Oman; Panama; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Romania; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Solomon Islands; Spain; Suriname; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan; Tajikistan; Togo; Tonga; Turkey; Uganda; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; Uruguay; Vanuatu; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe (117)

(Chana and Pakistan dropped out)

Sources [are here]( )

**Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs):** 101

Not US

**MSME WORKING GROUP** (2022), **DRAFT STATEMENT** (2021)

**2021 ministerial statement** (draft) [WT/MIN(21)/1](October 27, 2021) (94)

**See also:** 2017 ministerial statement: [WT/MIN(17)/58]( and revision [WT/MIN(17)/58/Rev.1](adding Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana and Nigeria), latest update (97)

**Latest working group list** (January 14, 2022) [INF/MSME/2/Rev.6](1)

**WTO website** [MSMEs page]( )

See also [this in a nutshell]( ), the independent [WTO Plurilaterals website]( )

Afghanistan; Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Bahrain; Belize; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; European Union; The Gambia; Georgia; Grenada;
Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Hong Kong; Iceland; Israel; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Rep. Korea; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Liechtenstein; Macao; Malaysia; Mexico; Moldova, Republic of; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Pakistan; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Qatar; Russian Federation; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Switzerland; Chinese Taipei; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; Uruguay; Viet Nam (67+27=94)

Sources are here

**Gender equality and women in trade:** 116*

*116 in the 2021 declaration, but 119 in 2017, or "more than 120" in latest material on the WTO website. Not US

**2017 ministerial declaration** [WTO website news](https://www.wto.org) (lists 118 including EU member states but not the EU itself — 119 if both included)

**2021 ministerial declaration** [WT/MIN(21)/4](https://www.wto.org) (lists 89 including the EU but not its member states — 116 if all included)

Dropping out: China, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Panama, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia 

Joining: Angola, Botswana, Georgia, Maldives, Trinidad and Tobago, UAE.

[WTO website main page](https://www.wto.org)

[WTO website news](https://www.wto.org) story, June 12, 2022 — on a statement by three co-chairs at the Ministerial Conference — refers to "more than 120 members" participating without listing them

[WTO website news archive](https://www.wto.org)

See also

- [this in a nutshell](https://www.wto.org)
- the independent [WTO Plurilaterals website](https://www.wto.org)’s list, which is not based on the 2021 declaration. It adds six WTO members — Afghanistan, Botswana, China, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Panama — and seven WTO observers Andorra, Bahamas, Belarus, Ethiopia, Serbia, Somalia, and Sudan

**2021 ministerial declaration:**

Afghanistan; Albania; Angola; Argentina; Australia; Austria; Barbados; Belgium; Benin; Botswana; Brazil; Bulgaria; Burundi; Cambodia; Canada; Chad; Chile; Colombia; Congo, Dem. Rep.; Costa Rica; Côte d’Ivoire; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Dominica; Dominican Rep.; Ecuador; El Salvador; Estonia; Eswatini; European Union; Fiji; Finland; France; Gabon; Gambia; Germany; Georgia; Greece; Grenada; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; Hungary; Iceland; Indonesia; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Jamaica; Japan; Kenya; Korea, Rep.; Kyrgyz Rep.; Laos; Latvia; Lesotho; Liberia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Madagascar; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Mali; Malta; Mauritius; Mexico; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Myanmar; Namibia; Netherlands; New Zealand; Niger; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russia; Rwanda; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan; Tajikistan; Togo; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Türkiye; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; Uruguay; Vanuatu; Viet Nam; Zambia (116)

Sources are here
ADDED: 2021 (Geneva)

These were launched on December 15. Originally intended for the Geneva Ministerial Conference, scheduled for November 30–December 3 and then postponed. The launch went ahead anyway. 
(The conference took place on June 12–17, 2022)

Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions: 75
(TESSD):

2021 ministerial statement WT/MIN(21)/6/Rev.2 (December 14, 2021 – 71 members listed)

Participants’ list on WTO website TESSD page
WTO news story July 11, 2023
WTO website news archive
WTO website main page
See also this in a nutshell, the independent WTO Plurilaterals website

Albania; Australia; Austria; Barbados; Bahrain; Belgium; Brazil; Bulgaria; Cabo Verde; Canada; Chad; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Denmark; Ecuador; Estonia; European Union; Fiji; Finland; France; Gambia; Germany; Greece; Honduras; Hong Kong; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Rep Korea; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Macao; Maldives; Malta; Mexico; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Panama; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Singapore; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Suriname; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan; Tajikistan; Türkiye; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Vanuatu (75)

Countries in bold joined after the December 14, 2021 Ministerial joint-statement

Sources are here

Plastics: Informal dialogue on plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade: 76
(IDP)

2021 ministerial statement WT/MIN(21)/8/Rev.2 (December 10, 2021)

WTO news story December 15, 2021
WTO website news archives
WTO website main page
WTO documents INF/TE/IDP/*
See also this in a nutshell, the independent WTO Plurilaterals website

Albania, Angola, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, EU, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Rep. Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macao, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru,
Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tonga, UK, Uruguay, US, Vanuatu (76, from WTO website news story and this one from March 2023 on the US joining)

Sources are here

**Fossil fuel subsidies:** 48

WTO website [Fossil fuel subsidy reform webpage](https://www.wto.org) (accessed July 14, 2023, lists 48 participants)

WTO website [news stories](https://www.wto.org)

See also [this in a nutshell](https://www.wto.org)

**2021 ministerial statement** [WT/MIN(21)/9/Rev.1](https://www.wto.org) (December 14, 2021, lists 45 participants)

See also: the independent [WTO Plurilaterals website](https://www.wto.org)

Albania; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Denmark; Estonia; European Union; Fiji; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Mali; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; New Zealand; North Macedonia; Norway; Panama; Paraguay; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Samoa; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Tonga; United Kingdom; Uruguay; Vanuatu (48)

Sources are here