

E-Commerce Moratorium: Issues before the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference and Way Forward

G D Lohani, Amit Kumar and Alaknanda Mishra

Background

In 1998, at the WTO's Second Ministerial Conference in Geneva, members adopted the Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce, introducing a temporary moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions. The measure was meant to give policymakers space to understand and regulate the then-emerging digital economy¹.

The moratorium emerged when digital trade was still experimental, long before streaming and routine online delivery of software, films, music, or books became commonplace. It aimed to prevent trade disruptions, encourage innovation in a nascent sector that was growing rapidly and also to resolve classification uncertainties under GATT and GATS².

The conditions that originally justified the moratorium have changed dramatically, as digital trade grew from less than USD 1 trillion in 1998 to over USD 16 trillion by 2025 with digitally delivered services alone representing 56% of global services exports. Developed nations hold more than 75% of these exports³. Physical products like CDs, books, and software have shifted to digital delivery, a transformation rapidly accelerated by COVID-19, which added 1.5 billion new internet users between 2018 and 2022, including a record surge in the pandemic's first year.

This policy brief traces how the WTO's e-commerce moratorium evolved from a temporary 1998 measure into a defining issue in digital trade, unpacking debates over its

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This Policy Brief has been prepared by Shri G D Lohani, Former Minister (Customs), PMI to the WTO in Geneva, Dr Amit Kumar, Assistant Professor, RIS and Ms. Alaknanda Mishra, Research Assistant (Legal), RIS. Views expressed are personal. Usual disclaimers apply.



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scope, revenue impact, and policy space, especially for countries like India. By weighing lapse, extension, or permanence, it explores what's truly at stake for digital governance, development equity, and India's strategic choices in a rapidly digitalizing world.

A Brief History

The e-commerce moratorium began in 1998, with a decision at the second Ministerial Conference, along with creation of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce (WPEC), which set a multilateral framework for discussing the relevant issues in digital trade, signifying members' cautious and exploratory stance on regulating this new and poorly understood form of cross-border trade⁴. The WPEC aimed to improve understanding of trade-related issues in electronic commerce without establishing new binding rules. It was to facilitate discussions among members to evaluate economic, legal, and development impacts as digital trade progressed.

However, there has been limited progress since then in these exploratory discussions under the WPEC. Lack of clarity remains even on the fundamental issue around the scope of e-commerce for the purpose of customs duty moratorium, i.e., whether it covers transmission alone or transmissions and content both. There is no definition of "electronic transmission" for the purpose of the moratorium. Further, a common understanding of the content of electronic transmissions - whether it is goods, services, intellectual property of a combination of these - continues to elude the Membership. The divergence in views have persisted for far too long.

While WTO Members had agreed in 1998, to temporarily continue their practice of "not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions" (Moratorium or NICDET), it has been extended periodically by consensus at all subsequent WTO Ministerial Meetings, except the meetings at Seattle (1999) and Cancun (2003).

In the interim, during the Eleventh Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, 71 WTO members launched a Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on e-commerce. This idea initially was to explore trade-related elements of e-commerce as a parallel track to the multilateral Work Programme. However, the JSI later moved ahead with the negotiations for establishing e-commerce rules, including on the moratorium. While proponents saw the JSI as a practical solution to multilateral impasse, concerns persist about inclusiveness and its alignment with existing WTO mandates⁵. It has also been argued that creation of this parallel track in plurilateral format has diluted the interest of members in multilateral discussions and primary and only interest of some members may only be in securing renewals of moratorium.

At the Twelfth Ministerial Conference, held in Geneva in 2022, members had agreed to better understand the moratorium's implications for developing countries' revenues and policy. However, leading up to the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference, members continued with differing views on renewal: proponents highlighted benefits for digital trade, while opponents raised concerns over its ambiguity, loss of policy space,

¹ World Trade Organization, "Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce," WT/MIN (98)/DEC/2, adopted May 20, 1998, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ecom_e/mindec1_e.htm

² Rashid S. Kaukab, "WTO Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions," International Institute for Sustainable Development, October 30, 2024, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/policy-analysis/wto-moratorium-customs-duties-electronic-transmission> (See section on "The digital divide lies at the heart of developing countries' concerns.").

³ UNCTAD. 2025. <https://unctad.org/publication/global-trade-update-december-2025-global-trade-poised-record-breaking-2025-flows>

⁴ The Geneva Ministerial Declaration on global electronic commerce, WTO, May 25, 1998, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ecom_e/mindec1_e.htm

⁵ Yasmin Ismail, E-commerce in the World Trade Organization: History and latest developments in the negotiations under the Joint Statement Initiative (International Institute for Sustainable Development and CUTS International, Geneva, January 2020), pp. 12-17. <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/e-commerce-world-trade-organization-.pdf>

moratorium not serving the intended purpose, and potential revenue losses. Discussions also covered the digital divide, consumer protection, and regulatory frameworks to shape future decisions⁶.

During the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13) held at the Abu Dhabi (March 2024), further extension of moratorium was met with some serious challenge. Only after a prolonged discussion, the temporary moratorium was extended until the 14th ministerial conference or 31 March 2026, whichever is earlier. The declaration also demanded further debates and evaluation of actual data about the effects of the moratorium and its consequences for the digital industrialization of developing and least developed countries. The moratorium and WPEC would expire on that date. This announcement heightened urgency around the moratorium's future by explicitly tying it to an expiration clause.

Towards MC 14 in Yaoundé

As MC 14 approaches, the United States along with a few other members have brought in a fresh proposal⁷ for making the moratorium permanent through a broad declaration. ACP group has demanded a comprehensive discussion, under the WPEC, including on development related aspects involved in e-commerce, bridging digital divide, financing the digital infrastructure, taxation etc. while proposing a temporary extension of the moratorium till the next MC.⁸ Based on the discussions at the WTO, the following three options are available to WTO Members: first, allow the moratorium to lapse as per the decision in MC 13; second, extend

the moratorium and make it permanent; third, extend the moratorium till the next session of the Ministerial Conference or for two years. An informed choice of option requires comprehensive analysis of issues and implications. It is necessary to have clarity on the definition of electronic transmissions, consensus on the scope of the moratorium and a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the moratorium.

Key Issues and Debates

Scope, Ambiguities, and Institutional Linkages

Despite existing for almost three decades, the e-commerce moratorium remains ambiguous in scope and legal effect, making it difficult to evaluate its economic, legal, and development consequences. What was once a pragmatic compromise over the undefined term “electronic transmission” has become a destabilizing ambiguity in global digital trade governance.

The WTO e-commerce moratorium lacks a formal definition of “electronic transmission”, resulting in uncertainty regarding its scope. The 1998 decision and its renewals only mention refraining from customs duties on electronic transmissions, leaving open questions about whether it includes data transmission, the content of transmitted data, and digitally delivered services. Key classification issues for determining relevant rules under GATT or GATS, having implication for members' rights and obligations in digital trade, remain contentious with ongoing disagreements about the definition of “electronic transmission”.

⁶ World Trade Organization, E-commerce – Briefing Note (13th WTO Ministerial Conference) https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc13_e/briefing_notes_e/ecommerce_e.htm#:~:text=Since%201998%2C%20WTO%20members%20have,decide%20to%20extend%20it%20again

⁷ JOB/GC/WPEC/1/Rev.1

⁸ WT/GC/WPEC/W/2

⁹ David E Bond, Richard Eglin, Neeraj Rajan Sabitha and Ian Saccomanno, ‘WTO Extends E-Commerce Tariff Moratorium as Broader Negotiations Continue’ (White & Case LLP, 7 March 2024) <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-alert/wto-extends-e-commerce-tariff-moratorium-broader-negotiations-continue>

¹⁰ WT/GC/W/859

¹¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/defending-american-companies-and-innovators-from-overseas-extortion-and-unfair-fines-and-penalties/>

¹² WT/GC/W/963/Rev.1

Going by the definition of the “customs duties” in the World Customs Organization (WCO) framework (as per which “customs duties” means the duties laid down in the customs tariff to which goods are liable on entering or leaving the customs territory) and, also as it is commonly understood, included under the WTO Agreements, they apply exclusively to goods. This understanding limits the applicability of moratorium to goods only even if it is argued that moratorium applies to content also besides the transmissions. These ambiguities have prompted a call by developing countries for a clearer definition and scope of the moratorium instead of periodic extensions of a broadly framed moratorium.

The WPEC required that WTO bodies explore the relationship between e-commerce and other WTO agreements, with the General Council playing a key role in reviewing the programme and assessing the temporary moratorium on customs duties for electronic transmissions. The two instruments are interconnected, with both being renewed at each ministerial conference. As per the MC13 decision the moratorium and the WPEC will expire simultaneously, either at MC14 or by March 31, 2026, whichever comes first.

The WPEC did not make tangible progress in multilateral format of the WTO in addressing the specific issues contained therein. At the same time, a parallel track plurilateral discussion, in e-commerce JSI, amongst its 91 members has added another layer to the complexities. JSI negotiations have highlighted uncertainty about how any final e-commerce agreement would

be incorporated into the WTO’s legal structure. While many JSI participants support integrating the outcome formally into the WTO system, possibly as a plurilateral agreement under Annex 4, which would require consensus of all members in accordance with Article X.9 of the Marrakesh Agreement, the consensus eludes⁹. The stabilized text of the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on e-commerce does more than simply acknowledge the existing WTO moratorium; it effectively reinforces and embeds it within the new agreement. Notably, the JSI text provides an explicit definition of “electronic transmission” that includes the content being transmitted, an issue left undefined in the original moratorium.

Policy Space Concerns

The developing countries have also expressed concerns relating to conceding the policy space that constrains development of capacity for digital trade and providing level playing field to their infant industry in this sector. Developing countries have argued that digital divide is widening, digital trade capacities are getting more and more concentrated, and ever-expanding digital trade and growth in technology such as 3D printing is making them vulnerable. It is also argued that developing countries are further vulnerable in this space due to lack of access to technology, technical know-how, infrastructure, finance, skill set gap and other resources. These issues are discussed further in the later section.

India has been emphasizing the need to re-examine the 1998 moratorium on customs duties for electronic

transmissions, arguing it no longer aligns with the current digital trade landscape. This position stems from concerns among developing countries that maintaining duty-free treatment might limit policy space over digital sectors¹⁰.

India and South Africa have argued that customs duties are used by countries to support nascent domestic industries, regulate an unwanted surge in imports and facilitate industrialization. The development experience of nearly all countries across the world makes it evident that tariffs are amongst the most effective policy tools for achieving these objectives. Customs duties have been resorted to by developed countries to provide protection to their industry and to enable them to become internationally competitive. It is only fair that the developing world is given a similar opportunity. Thus, retaining the policy space to impose customs duties becomes an important objective in itself. They also argue that removal of the moratorium in no way means that Members will necessarily impose customs duties across the board. The key is policy space and to use such policy space appropriately for domestic digital industrialization and generation of local jobs in the era of Industry 4.0¹¹

It has been argued that the moratorium causes developing nations to lose out on tariff income and impedes their ability to employ customs taxes as a fiscal and regulatory measure, which causes resistance in their policy space.¹²

Policy space argument needs to be seen from the perspective of the growth of e-commerce sector which has expanded exponentially over the years and continues to expand at a

rapid pace. This is best explained with the facts and figures relating to the US economy. As per a very recent study by the Harvard Business School (sponsored by Amazon, Google, and Meta), the share of digital economy in the US GDP has grown from 11% in 2020 to 18% in 2024. During this period the value of digital economy doubled to almost USD 5 trillion. Employment in this sector in the US grew 12X faster than the overall US economy. Creator economy grew by 7.5 times since 2020 to USD 500 billion. Media ad spending has grown 10 times. e-commerce grew by more than 7.5% compounded rate while in general retail sale grew by 2.5%. New areas of growth have emerged rapidly in the digital economy.¹³

As per WTO analysis, the digitally delivered services- that is, services provided via computer networks, from streaming games to remote consulting services — are an emerging source of growth, accounting for 54% of global services exports in 2022, and 12% of total global trade in goods and services.¹⁴

With rapid growth of e-commerce, and digital trade, and emerging newer areas of growth that are capital, skill and technology intensive, the policy space issue assumes significantly higher importance.

Revenue Concerns

Arguments over the WTO moratorium have focused on an assertion that it has caused significant losses in tariff income for developing nations, since these talks are a part of larger issues, including UNCTAD research. An estimated USD 8 billion in potential tariff income was also ceded by developing countries in 2017 alone, with losses resulting

from both electronic transmissions and digitized physical commodities. Developing countries like Thailand, India, Mexico and Nigeria have been identified as suffering significant tariff losses.

India, South Africa, Indonesia and other developing countries have been expressing concerns on revenue loss to developing countries on account of the moratorium, arguing that developing nations and LDCs are suffering from significant customs revenue losses¹⁵ and face challenges in digital industrialization. In addition, the moratorium could be a continuous provision of duty-free access to developed countries to enter the markets of developing countries and LDCs. This will have a negative impact on economic growth, employment, and sustainable development (South Africa & India, 2021)¹⁶. It is argued that since the WTO moratorium prevents members from imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, countries are unable to apply tariffs to digitized products that were once dutiable, limiting both fiscal revenue generation and the use of tariffs as a trade policy instrument. This concern is especially pronounced for developing countries, which generally maintain higher bound tariff rates¹⁷.

Indonesia further highlights, as analyzed by the UNCTAD (Kozul-Wright & Banga, 2020) in the period 2017-2020, it is estimated that developing countries and LDCs lost USD 56 billion of tariff revenue, of which USD 48 billion were lost by the developing countries and USD 8 billion by the LDCs. It is interesting to

note that this loss of tariff revenue is from the imports of just 49 products (at HS six-digit), which include many luxury items like movies and music oriented matter, and video games (Banga, 2019)¹⁰. These studies have also highlighted that with the advent and expansion of 3D manufacturing technologies the revenue loss would substantially increase.

It has been argued that the embargo hinders the government's ability to collect taxes on an expanding portion of digital trade by forbidding the enforcement of customs charges on electronic transmissions, which causes significant revenue losses. According to UNCTAD studies, economies as a whole could gather billions of dollars in customs charges as the market for digital goods and services grows. Economic costs and a restriction on budgetary freedom are two ways that this loss of tariff income manifests itself, particularly for developing nations. The rising need to reevaluate or lift the moratorium in order to maintain national taxation powers over digital imports has been fueled in part by this budgetary impact, particularly among emerging countries¹⁸.

OECD contributions on the other hand argued that the benefits of the moratorium outweigh the costs and that UNCTAD may have overestimated the revenue loss¹⁹. The proponents have argued that revenue concerns of developing countries could be addressed by imposition of non-discriminatory domestic taxes like GST/VAT. However, developing countries argue that Internal taxes are not an alternative to customs

duties and serve a different purpose. For countries that want to promote digital industrialization, customs duties should remain part of the toolbox to be deployed based on the strategic objectives of each country in pursuit of industrial policy.²⁰

Proponents' Argument in Support of Moratorium

Proponents of the WTO e-commerce moratorium argue that customs duties on electronic transmissions would yield minimal and uncertain revenue while causing significant economic harm. They assert that digital trade mainly involves services, rendering customs duties on electronic transmissions impractical and inefficient. By maintaining the moratorium, trade stability, predictability, and innovation-friendly conditions are fostered, allowing countries, especially developing ones, to reap long-term benefits in productivity and investment instead of depending on uncertain border tariffs. Thus, benefits of moratorium significantly outweigh the not so significant revenue consideration. It has also been argued that, as most digital transactions are already taxed through domestic instruments such as VAT. They emphasize that the moratorium is indirectly increasing public revenue through economic growth rather than border duties. Proponents also argue that reduced trade costs and increased participation in global value chains offer more significant economic advantages to developing countries than potential tariff revenues, particularly in light of enforcement difficulties and that the moratorium benefits

MSMEs by lowering trade costs and promoting global integration, expanding domestic tax bases. Alternative non-discriminatory taxes are considered more effective, supporting long-term growth, innovation, and inclusive development²¹.

Developing countries (India, South Africa, and others) have, however, argued that benefit of e-commerce moratorium have not accrued to developing countries and expressed concern on widening digital divide, the challenges faced by MSMEs in developing countries, over concentration of E-commerce capacities and emerging challenges. It is also argued that when assessing the total trade of electronic transmissions, the proponents consider only digitizable goods and conclude that these remain modest but when estimating the impact of the moratorium on exports, especially of SMEs, the proponents contradictorily consider the extended scope of the moratorium by including services and find the impact to be huge, thus questioning the credibility of proponents' arguments.^{22,23}

The proponents have also argued that lapsing of moratorium would create uncertainties, and any effort to impose customs duty on e-commerce by one member would meet with reciprocal action by other members. India is often cited as a case as it is one of the biggest exporters of IT/software services. However, these precise issues, the scope of moratorium, whether it covers transmission, goods or services, and whether moratorium has increased commitment only of developing countries (though initial argument was that it was not altering any commitment

or obligation of members) have not so far been dealt with effectively in WPEC and the relevant WTO bodies, even though countries like India and South Africa have been pushing for it. Considering the scope of customs duty, as mentioned above, moratorium seems to cover only digitized goods even if a view is taken that it covers content beside transmission. It is therefore quite arguable whether it covers services at all. WTO commitments in services under GATS are inherently asymmetric, structured to allow different levels of commitment based on a country's development level, capacity, and specific economic interests. Keeping these critical issues unresolved is adding to the concerns of the developing countries. This may, however, be tactical on part of the proponents of the moratorium.

WTO Members' Recent Position on Moratorium

As stated earlier in the paper, the US along with certain other members (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay) have in a recent submission²⁴ made a pitch for making the moratorium permanent. Developed countries members including the EU, UK, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand support permanent moratorium and so also certain developing countries like China, Chile, Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

The US, in particular, has also pushed aggressively for the moratorium in its policy statements¹¹. and bilateral reciprocal trade deals, particularly with developing countries like Indonesia²⁵ and Malaysia²⁶.

On the other hand, the ACP Group has made a submission for renewed discussion on key issues and in the interim temporary extension of moratorium till the next Ministerial Conference.²⁷ A large number of LDCs are part of ACP and therefore LDC as a group would align with ACP.

Developing countries like Brazil, Nigeria, Türkiye and certain others have been expressing concern on e-commerce moratorium and remain cautious towards any proposal to make the moratorium permanent. The position of India, South Africa and Indonesia is as stated earlier in this paper. However, Indonesia has entered into a reciprocal trade agreement recently under which it may be under an obligation to support the moratorium²⁸.

72 out of 91 members of JSI on e-commerce supported the text¹² for its inclusion in Annex 4 of the Marrakesh Agreement. As these members have committed themselves to permanent moratorium in JSI, they would also support the permanent moratorium in multilateral forum. Some of the remaining 19 members of JSI have concerns over the moratorium, e.g., Brazil, Nigeria, Indonesia. This makes it evident that consensus would elude on any proposal for a permanent moratorium.

Moratorium @ MC 14, likely State of Play and India's Option

Given the current scenario, theoretically there are three possible outcomes. One, the moratorium lapses as per the decision in MC 13 (supra); two, moratorium is made permanent; three,

moratorium is extended temporarily again till next MC as has been proposed by the ACP group.

Practically, the second outcome is unlikely. A number of members would be highly hesitant to make moratorium permanent. This is also evident from the fact that even the JSI members do not support this as detailed earlier in the paper. Members' discussions in the WPEC in last two years have really not brought out anything concrete or favourable in support of making the moratorium permanent. With its scope remaining unclear, commitment remaining vague, enforceability remaining questionable in the absence of comprehensive rules, and global trading environment remaining uncertain, it is highly unlikely that Members could achieve consensus, more so as the concerns over moratorium have been increasing with exponential growth of e-commerce.

In case of no decision, first outcome is automatic as expiration date for moratorium has already been set in MC 13 decision that was taken by consensus.

Going by the state of play, the continued interest in developing countries for discussing the issues involved in WPEC, it is likely that the third possible outcome gets highest traction. However, it would require a consensus for reaching this decision. In MC 13, consensus for a temporary extension had proved very difficult and extension could only be secured with hectic effort at the fag end of the conference.

Moratorium has been extended routinely in past. However, decisions in recent MCs have come with difficulties.

Therefore, in MC 14, Members may strive for a decision that compels better discussions on issues of specific concerns, particularly to developing countries. If members opt for the third possible outcome, developing countries may insist for certain conditions and asks for a temporary extension rather than a routine decision. In this context it would also be interesting as to how members deal with the proposal on JSI on e-commerce. India has argued in recent discussions that WPEC is the forum for deliberation of e-commerce issues. These discussions in the WPEC should lay the ground for rulemaking in the multilateral forum, rather than creating a parallel non-multilateral track.

Another possibility, which is not unforeseeable, is that the way WTO reform discussions are unfolding, including as regards the negotiating function, decision making in WTO and the prioritisation of issues, all issues before the ministers in MC 14 get embroiled in the WTO reform discussions (member may seek clarity on these fundamental issues before taking decision on any specific agenda).

Multilateral negotiations are all about give and take after all.

Way Forward

Given the prevailing complexity and varied stances, a pragmatic way forward for India may lie in careful consideration of the following points concerning the e-commerce moratorium:

- Developing a clear internal understanding, upon careful analysis, as to what are the overall implication for India if moratorium lapses. This may require assessing the policy space requirement as e-commerce

grows, including the need for providing level playing field to our upcoming industry, the future scenarios in e-commerce and digital trade, and securing our interest in global trade. These discussions may not be possible at the time available till MC unless we have already made some progress. However, some quick and meaningful analysis may help in shaping up and leading the discussions in WTO. The extensive discussion may be pushed to post MC14. However, the ground for these discussions has to be laid in MC14 upon taking specific directions/guidance from Ministers.

- In case the traction is towards temporary extension, on what terms would the developing

countries like to negotiate it, including institutionalizing concrete discussions in the multilateral forum? What could be the tradeoff here?

- What direction/guidance could be taken from Ministers for effective, concrete and meaningful discussions under WPEC.
- Impact and interplay with discussions on JSI on e-commerce: Has JSI on e-commerce adversely impacted the prospects of multilateral discussions on the sensitive issues concerning e-commerce? More so, considering the clear understanding that WPEC was to discuss fundamental issues, before any attempt towards rule making. If yes, how could this issue be effectively raised?

About the Authors



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“The WTO e-commerce moratorium, originally conceived as a temporary measure, has continued for decades amid unresolved issues regarding the nature and regulation of digital trade. While digital trade is expanding rapidly, its benefits remain largely concentrated among a few countries and few global platforms. There is an imperative for inclusive participation by developing economies”

Amb. J. S. Deepak, *Former Representative of India to the WTO, Geneva*



“The e-commerce moratorium should be approached strategically and legally, not just technically. There is a need of preserving policy space, linking discussions to relevant WTO provisions, and understanding the scope of customs duties on digital transmissions. A balanced and pragmatic negotiating approach is essential to safeguard national interests while engaging in global digital trade discussions.”

Mr. Abhijit Das, *Former Head, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT*



“Since MC12, WTO discussions on the e-commerce moratorium have progressed through a dedicated work programme addressing issues like consumer protection, competition and the digital divide. Ahead of MC14, members remain divided between no moratorium, permanent and temporary extensions, with multiple proposals under consideration. With no converging text yet, the coming weeks of negotiations will be critical in shaping the future of the moratorium and digital trade discussions.”

Aashish Chandorkar, *Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the WTO, Geneva*



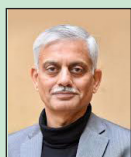
“Although India’s share in global e-commerce remains modest; domestic innovation and competition are growing steadily. The taxation of digital services can affect costs for businesses and consumers, and e-commerce will play a key role in future growth and entrepreneurship. There is a need for aligning decisions with the realities and priorities of India’s economy.”

Shri Dammu Ravi, *Former Secretary (ER), MEA*



“The digital trade moratorium debate is less about revenue and more about its definition and scope. Given the rapid evolution of digital services, maintaining a temporary moratorium and clarifying the rules would be a pragmatic approach.”

Prof. Pritam Banerjee, *Head & Professor, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT*



“Digitalisation has transformed goods and services into tradable digital flows, driving rapid growth in global digital trade. There is a need for more detailed data and evidence on digital exports, imports and value creation to inform policy decisions. A granular, forward-looking approach, considering carriage, content and conduct, is essential for guiding decisions on the future of the e-commerce moratorium.”

Mr. Deepak Maheshwari, *Senior Policy Advisor, CSEP*



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RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



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AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India’s development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



FIRD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India’s development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India’s engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.



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