



## Trade Developments

21 April 2026

Hello and welcome to this edition of Trade Developments.

For more on international trade, check out our [dedicated webpage](#), or [email](#) to enquire about our trade policy briefings.

### US Trade Update

Deloitte's US firm has published their latest update covering the IEEPA refunds system and tariff updates on key metals and medicines. The update can be found [here](#).

### WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference

The WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14), held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, concluded with mixed results as ministers grappled with one of the most challenging periods in the organisation's history. On one of the most closely watched issues, the longstanding moratorium on customs duties for electronic transmissions expired without a universal replacement, though 66 members covering around 70% of global trade, including the EU, UK, China, and Canada, signed an interim declaration committing not to impose such duties. Elsewhere, hopes for meaningful progress on WTO institutional reform and dispute settlement were largely deferred, with the WTO's Appellate Body now non-functional for over six years and no agreed framework for resolving the impasse in place.

While the rules underpinning the majority of international trade remain intact, the conference has reinforced a growing trend towards plurilateral agreements among like-minded economies where universal consensus cannot be reached. For a full breakdown of what was agreed at MC14 and what it means for your business, read our analysis [here](#).

### Government Plans to Align with Some EU Rules

According to reports in the press, the government plans to introduce legislation that would allow the UK to mirror new EU laws via a fast-track process, bypassing the need for a full parliamentary vote each time. The move, expected later this year, is designed to enable "dynamic alignment" with EU rules in areas including food standards, carbon pricing, and electricity trading, with ministers hoping to unveil concrete deals in these areas at the summer EU-UK summit. The government argues the measure will cut red tape for exporters and deliver billions of pounds in economic benefits.

However, the plans have drawn sharp criticism from the Conservatives, Reform UK, and even some Liberal Democrats, who warn that Parliament risks being sidelined in the process, with the UK now having no voting rights over EU rules it would be obliged to follow. For a deeper look at what the broader EU reset means for businesses across agri-food trade, emissions trading, and workforce mobility, read our full analysis [here](#).

### Consultation on Powers to Protect the UK from Adverse Economic Pressure

The UK government has launched a consultation on introducing new powers to respond to adverse economic pressure applied by foreign states, signalling a potential expansion to the UK's trade policy toolkit. The proposal would allow the government to deploy trade-related countermeasures where the UK faces adverse economic pressure, including unexplained and/or excessive customs delays and arbitrary tariffs. Areas in scope of the consultation where the government could seek new powers include trade in goods and services, procurement, intellectual property and investment.

The EU introduced similar legislation in 2023, establishing the Anti-Coercion Instrument, allowing the EU to implement restrictive trade measures in response to economic coercion. The consultation can be found [here](#).

### Greater Together LA

This May, the UK-US economic relationship takes centre stage as the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign hosts Greater Together LA, a landmark five-day expo running from 18 to 22 May 2026 in Los Angeles, California. Secretary of State for Business and Trade Peter Kyle will lead the largest ever UK delegation to the United States, underscoring the strategic importance of a bilateral trading relationship valued at \$413 billion and supporting 2.6 million jobs across both economies. Against a backdrop of mutual investment exceeding \$1.5 trillion, the event brings together political leaders and senior corporate delegates. The government's announcement can be found [here](#).

### EU-UK Forum Annual Conference

The EU-UK Forum held its Annual Conference in Brussels on 16 April, bringing together senior figures from both sides of the Channel to discuss the evolving state of EU-UK relations. The conference addressed the development of diplomatic and trade ties, efforts to boost European competitiveness, and the growing importance of security and defence cooperation. Among the keynote speakers were Nick Thomas-Symonds, the UK's Minister for European Union Relations, and Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security. Panels throughout the day examined how both sides can deepen cooperation in a period of improved dialogue, with security and defence featuring prominently alongside economic and trade themes. You can watch the full conference [here](#).

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