

Statement on Visa Exemption Granted by the Host Member of the MC14 23 March, 2026

After announcing its decision not to participate in the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) on the morning of 20 March, the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu received an email, at 7:18 pm on 20 March, from the Permanent Mission of Cameroon (the host Member of the MC14), with an attached document dated 19 March, authorizing our delegation members “to travel and stay in the Republic of Cameroon for 30 days within [in] the framework of the 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization” (visa exemption).

After careful examination, however, we find this visa exemption document contains many gross errors. It misspells the names of several members of our delegation. All members of our delegation (including 8 females and 10 males) are listed as female (Ms.), except our Permanent Representative who is addressed as Dr. We regret receiving a visa document with such obvious and serious errors regarding the critical identification information of our delegation members.

As early as November 2024, we had requested the delegation of the host Member for a meeting or business lunch to discuss logistical issues with a view to facilitating our smooth participation in the MC14, but without avail. From then through 2025, we made several attempts for (lunch) meetings with the delegation of the host Member, but all without avail. When the host Member, on 21 February, issued the approved pre-enrolment which mis-designated the nationality of our delegation members as “Taiwan, Province of China”, we immediately requested a meeting with its ambassador, but again to no avail. It was only until 5 March that our ambassador, finally and for the first time, met with Ambassador of Cameroon Mission, thanks to the assistance of the WTO Secretariat. During that meeting, we demonstrated our flexibility by suggesting several alternative solutions based upon past practices of the MCs. However, as of 19 March, the host Member had still not informed us of any progress, notwithstanding two formal letters addressed and delivered to the delegation of host Member, setting the deadline as 16 March.

Our delegation waited for two more days until 18 March, Wednesday, as suggested by Madam Director-General. Thereafter, we waited for one more day. It was only until we announced our decision not to participate in the MC14, on the morning of 20 March, Friday, that we received an email from the delegation of the host Member on the evening of the same day. Although our delegation appreciated the arrival of visa exemption, it came too late, given the difficulty of rearranging the logistics, if still possible. It also fell short of providing a clear and sufficient guarantee for the smooth entry of our delegation members into the Republic of Cameroon. As of today, 23 March, we have yet to receive any elaboration or explanation about the package arrangements along with this visa exemption document. Moreover, the abovementioned errors therein are incomprehensible and unacceptable. We do have legitimate concerns about whether this document can effectuate our entry into the Republic of Cameroon, with all the necessary protocols and privileges accorded under the WTO framework.

The WTO is an institution of multilateral trade order. The prospect and success of multilateralism depend on good-faith negotiations and mutual trust among Members. A Member should not be pressured to participate in the Ministerial Conference without sufficient guarantees and equal

treatment for its smooth entry, with all the necessary protocols and privileges accorded under the WTO framework, into the territory of the host Member.

We are thankful for the assistance of the Secretariat and for the support of many friends among other Members during our negotiations with the host Member over this visa issue. With regret, the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu will maintain its decision not to participate in the MC14. Our decision is taken in the hope that future engagements can proceed on the basis of mutual respect, adherence to established practices, and the shared commitment to the fundamental principles that underpin the WTO.