

TRADE POLICY REVIEW OF SRI LANKA

15 AND 17 OCTOBER 2025

*Concluding Remarks by the Chairperson,
Ambassador H.E. Mr Kairat Torebayev
(Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan)*

1. The fifth Trade Policy Review of Sri Lanka has offered us a good opportunity to deepen our understanding of recent developments in, and challenges to, its trade, economic, and investment policies. Sri Lanka's firm commitment to multilateralism and its initiatives to diversify and digitise its economy have been widely appreciated. Indeed, the more than 200 advance written questions submitted by 16 Members and the 23 delegations that took the floor during the TPRB meeting underline the importance attached by Members to Sri Lanka's trade and investment policies and practices.
 2. I would like to thank the Sri Lankan delegation, headed by Hon. Mr. Wasantha SAMARASINGHE, Minister of Trade, Commerce, Food Security and Co-operative Development, for its active participation in this exercise. I would also like to thank our discussant Ambassador Prasith SUON of Cambodia for his insightful remarks, and all the delegations that took the floor for their valuable contributions to this Review.
 3. Members commended Sri Lanka for its remarkable resilience during a particularly challenging review period, marked by a series of adverse shocks. They praised Sri Lanka's progress in debt restructuring, as well as its bold reform efforts to restore macroeconomic stability and foster sustainable, diversified and inclusive growth. Specifically, Members appreciated the move to allow full capital repatriation since 2017, and the raft of measures introduced under the 2023 IMF-Extended Fund Facility with an emphasis on transparency and good governance. Sri Lanka's trade facilitation initiatives, including risk-based customs clearance, the digitization of various procedures, its Authorized Economic Operator programme, and its efforts to implement a National Single Window by 2027 were also recognized. Furthermore, Members welcomed Sri Lanka's progress in broader digital transformation, including its draft e-commerce policy and the establishment of a Data Protection Authority.
 4. Members saw scope for further business and investment climate improvements through enhanced regulatory transparency, stronger anti-corruption and accountability frameworks, modernized licensing procedures, and adherence to international standards for products and processes. Concerns were expressed about the lack of predictability for traders arising from Sri Lanka's modest tariff binding coverage, its complex system of taxes and para-tariffs, and certain customs valuation practices. Some Members also encouraged Sri Lanka to lower tariff and non-tariff barriers on agricultural products, reduce state-owned enterprises' economic footprint, enhance environmental and labour rights safeguards, and strengthen intellectual property protection and enforcement.
 5. Sri Lanka has remained committed to a rules-based multilateral trading system while expanding regional integration through recent RTAs with Thailand and Singapore and an aspiration to accede to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), for which more information was sought. Members welcomed Sri Lanka's ratification of the Trade Facilitation and Fisheries Subsidies Agreements and appreciated its active and constructive participation in the WTO's work, including in the discussions on agriculture, fisheries, food security, trade facilitation, and small vulnerable economies. Several Members encouraged Sri Lanka to participate in the Multi-Party Arbitration Arrangement and invited it to become a party to plurilateral initiatives. Some members called on the wider WTO Membership to provide adequate support to Sri Lanka in its journey towards sustainable and inclusive development.
 6. These are some of the key issues that have emerged in our discussion. I hope that the Sri Lankan delegation will consider and further reflect on the many constructive comments it has received during this Review. Finally, I would like to thank all those that participated in our discussion, and I look forward to receiving Sri Lanka's answers to outstanding questions within the next month, at which point the Review will be successfully concluded.
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