

TRADE POLICY REVIEW OF VANUATU

10 AND 12 DECEMBER 2025

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

1. This Review once again underscores the importance of transparency and cooperation at the heart of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism and the Multilateral Trading System. Vanuatu's second Trade Policy Review has provided a valuable opportunity for constructive dialogue among Members and has enhanced understanding of Vanuatu's trade and investment policies since its first Review in 2018.

2. I would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Sumbue Antas, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the WTO, and the rest of the delegation of Vanuatu for their active engagement throughout this review process. I would also like to thank H.E. Ambassador Clare Kelly, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the WTO, for her valuable contribution as a discussant.

3. This Review featured a high level of engagement, reflecting the strong interest that Members attach to Vanuatu's trade and investment policies. Vanuatu received 105 advance written questions from 12 Members, and 20 delegations took the floor during the two-day meetings. These exchanges provided a comprehensive overview of Vanuatu's economy and trade-policy framework, its engagement with the Multilateral Trading System, and the remaining challenges to its future development path.

4. Members commended Vanuatu for its resilience and steady economic recovery despite facing the COVID-19 pandemic and repeated natural disasters and external shocks such as cyclones, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake and the liquidation of Air Vanuatu. They recognized Vanuatu's successful graduation from least-developed-country status in 2020 and welcomed its continued efforts to embed trade within national development strategies, notably through Vision 2030 and the Trade Policy Framework Update 2019–2025. Members highlighted the important role of trade for Vanuatu's open economy and encouraged further progress in diversifying exports, strengthening services, particularly tourism and digitally delivered services, and improving integration into regional and global markets.

5. In this context, Members welcomed Vanuatu's reform efforts in trade facilitation, including the introduction and ongoing rollout of the Vanuatu Electronic Single Window, modernization of customs procedures, and steps toward fuller implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. They also noted initiatives to improve the investment climate, including reforms to the foreign-investment regime through an amendment to the Foreign Investment Act, promotion of digital trade and e-commerce through the E-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap, which would allow Vanuatu to participate further in global value chains, and policies aimed at supporting MSMEs, financial inclusion, and private-sector development. Some Members commended Vanuatu's work to develop the manufacturing sector through the National Industrial Development Strategy and strengthening intellectual property framework through accession to various WIPO treaties and the introduction of legislation on geographical indications for key products such as kava. They also commended Vanuatu's efforts to digitize its economy and reform in telecommunications.

6. Members further acknowledged Vanuatu's strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and inclusive growth, reflecting its particular vulnerabilities as a Small Island Developing State. They took note of the central role of agriculture and fisheries for livelihoods and food security, while encouraging continued efforts to strengthen sustainability, productivity, and market access. In this regard, Members urged Vanuatu to finalize the ratification process for the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. They also welcomed Vanuatu's active participation in discussions on, *inter alia*, small economies, agriculture, additional fisheries subsidies provisions, trade facilitation,

subsidies and countervailing measures, trade and environment, SPS issues, services, and plastics pollution.

7. Members also recognized Vanuatu as an important partner within the Pacific region and beyond, noting its constructive role in regional integration initiatives, labour-mobility schemes, and bilateral and plurilateral cooperation. They welcomed Vanuatu's engagement in regional trade arrangements, including the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus), and its efforts to use trade as a tool to promote resilience, employment, and sustainable development.

8. Many Members emphasized Vanuatu's constructive and active participation in the WTO, commending its support for the rules-based multilateral trading system and its engagement across a wide range of WTO bodies and initiatives. This included its participation in the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement, contributions to discussions relevant to small, vulnerable economies, and efforts to improve transparency through notifications. Members encouraged Vanuatu to continue submitting outstanding notifications and to make use of available WTO technical-assistance and capacity-building support. Some Members encouraged Vanuatu to participate in various plurilateral agreements, such as the Agreement on Government Procurement, the Information Technology Agreement, and the Agreement on Electronic Commerce.

9. At the same time, Members identified areas where further reforms could help Vanuatu achieve stronger and more inclusive growth. These included reducing trade costs, improving connectivity and infrastructure, strengthening institutional capacity, and addressing gender disparities through expanded access to finance, skills, and market opportunities. In this context, Members noted Vanuatu's National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030 and welcomed its support for the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender at the WTO. Members also emphasized the need to enhance economic resilience and competitiveness through export diversification, disaster-recovery financing, and clearer trade and investment governance, including investment-regime reforms. In addition, they sought clarification on regulatory and border measures, sector-specific strategies, and Vanuatu's digital and green-transition agenda. Members encouraged Vanuatu to continue advancing reforms in line with its development objectives.

10. To conclude, I encourage Vanuatu's delegation to consider carefully the constructive comments and recommendations made by Members during this Review. Regarding advance written questions, Members look forward to receiving any outstanding responses within the customary time-frame.

11. I would like to once again express my appreciation to the delegation of Vanuatu, the discussant, and all Members for their thoughtful engagement and contributions throughout this Review. I also thank the Secretariat for its professionalism and dedication in supporting the preparation and conduct of this exercise.
