



WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION



**Technical Barriers to  
Trade Agreement**



## Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement

The Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement aims to ensure that regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures followed by WTO members do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.



## Annual Review of TBT Agreement

The WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade collects data on an annual basis on the implementation of the TBT Agreement. The information in this brochure is based on the 2024 review.

## About the WTO

The World Trade Organization is the international body dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible, with a level playing field for all its members.



## Disclaimer

This document has been prepared under the WTO Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the position of WTO members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO. The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the WTO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

# Contents

## Foreword

2

1

## TBT@30

3

2

## MC13 Declaration on Regulatory Cooperation

4

3

## Adoption of the 10<sup>th</sup> Triennial Review

5

4

## Conformity Assessment Procedure guidelines

6

5

## Transparency Working Group

7

6

## Notifications on product requirements

8

7

## Submission of notifications

9

8

## ePing's global reach

10

9

## Specific Trade Concerns

11

10

## Technical assistance

12

# Foreword

The WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) recorded some remarkable achievements in 2024. A Ministerial Declaration on TBT adopted at the 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi confirmed members' commitment to regulatory cooperation and transparency and to reducing technical barriers to trade. The Committee also adopted two sets of guidelines on enhancing transparency on TBT matters and on conformity assessment procedures.

In addition, members adopted a comprehensive three-year work programme on standards and regulations, focusing on areas such as deepening discussions on artificial intelligence and critical emerging technologies, agriculture, environment, health, and development.



Standards and regulations play a crucial role in addressing public interests, such as health and environmental protection. By ensuring their transparency and interoperability, we maximize their effectiveness while preventing them from becoming unnecessary barriers to trade.

By facilitating international regulatory cooperation and the active involvement of regulators, trade officials, experts and standardization bodies, the TBT Committee fosters trust across supply chains and supports sound trade policy-making.

It is an honour to chair the TBT Committee, which is a model of progress, innovation, transparency and cooperation on trade issues, both inside and outside this organization. I commend the work of my predecessors and our dedicated Secretariat for their expertise and commitment to advancing the work of the Committee.

## Daniela García (Ecuador)

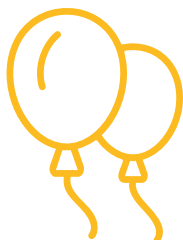
Chair of the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Daniela García', with a horizontal line underneath.

# 1

## TBT@30

The WTO marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TBT Agreement with an event held on the margins of the November TBT Committee meeting. The event brought together representatives of international standard-setting organizations, current and former TBT delegates, and the private sector, who reflected on the past, present and future of the Agreement. Addressing the event, Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said; “it is you, this Committee, that keeps the Agreement dynamic. The work you do is fundamental to keep trade flowing, in good times and bad”.



**30<sup>th</sup>**  
**year**



## 2

**MC13 Declaration on Regulatory Cooperation**

At the WTO's 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, WTO members emphasized the TBT Committee's key role in fostering regulatory cooperation to reduce technical barriers to trade. The Declaration, the first in the area of TBT, highlights the importance of dialogue and early engagement on standards and regulations to address challenges in climate change, human health, and the digital economy. It also underlines the important role of digital tools like ePing and eAgenda to promote regulatory convergence and prevent trade friction.



**13<sup>th</sup> WTO MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE  
ABU DHABI - UAE**

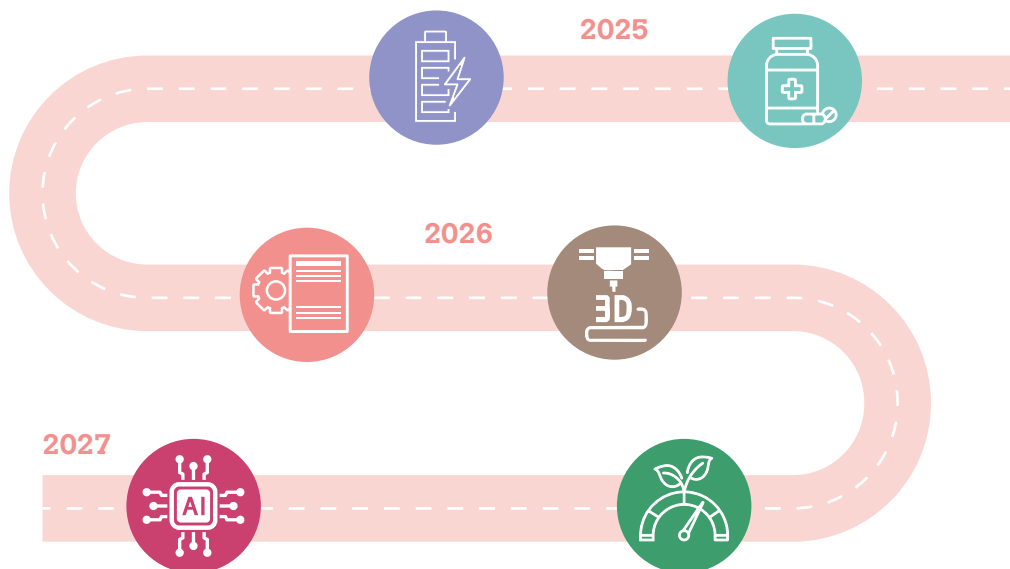
**2024**



## 3

**Adoption of the 10<sup>th</sup> Triennial Review**

At its November meeting, the TBT Committee adopted the 10<sup>th</sup> Triennial Review report, which takes stock of the main achievements of the Committee over the past three years and presents a work programme for the next three-year cycle. Members agreed to take forward more than 40 specific recommendations, including the organization of 23 thematic sessions covering topics such as critical and emerging technologies, decarbonization standards, additive manufacturing, inter-operable data standards, lithium-ion batteries and medical devices. They also agreed to take steps to further improve Committee practices, transparency procedures and digital tools.



## 4

**Conformity Assessment Procedure guidelines**

Members adopted voluntary guidelines on conformity assessment procedures aimed at helping regulators to develop or adopt appropriate procedures for determining whether products fulfil the requirements established by relevant technical regulations or standards. The objective is to ensure that measures to verify compliance do not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade. The guidelines help to enhance trust between different regulatory systems and facilitate the acceptance of conformity assessment results. They cover topics such as risk, market surveillance, and the use of international standards.

**Guidelines on certification adopted by the TBT Committee****What happened**

In March 2024, the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade adopted guidelines to help governments better choose and design their conformity assessment procedures (CAPs), ensuring products comply with safety and other specifications in standards and regulations without creating unnecessary trade obstacles.

**What are CAPs?**

Procedures like certification or testing used to determine if a product meets requirements. For example, quality or safety requirement of a bicycle helmet, or certification of organic foods.

**What are the guidelines?**

- Focus on risk management, market surveillance, and international standards.
- Emphasize flexibility, transparency and inclusivity with special consideration to the technical assistance needs of developing economies.
- Non-prescriptive and voluntary.

**Why are they important?**

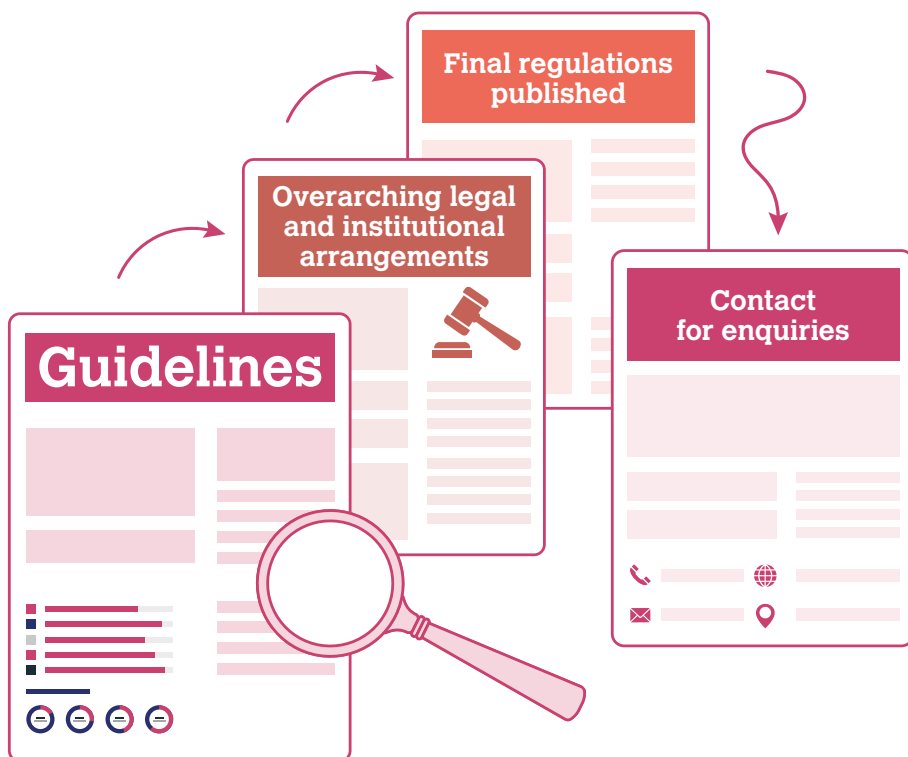
- CAPs build trust between exporters, importers, authorities and consumers.
- Ensure that products meet specifications set out in regulations or standards.
- Help regulators make better choices in situations where risks vary.



## 5

**Transparency Working Group**

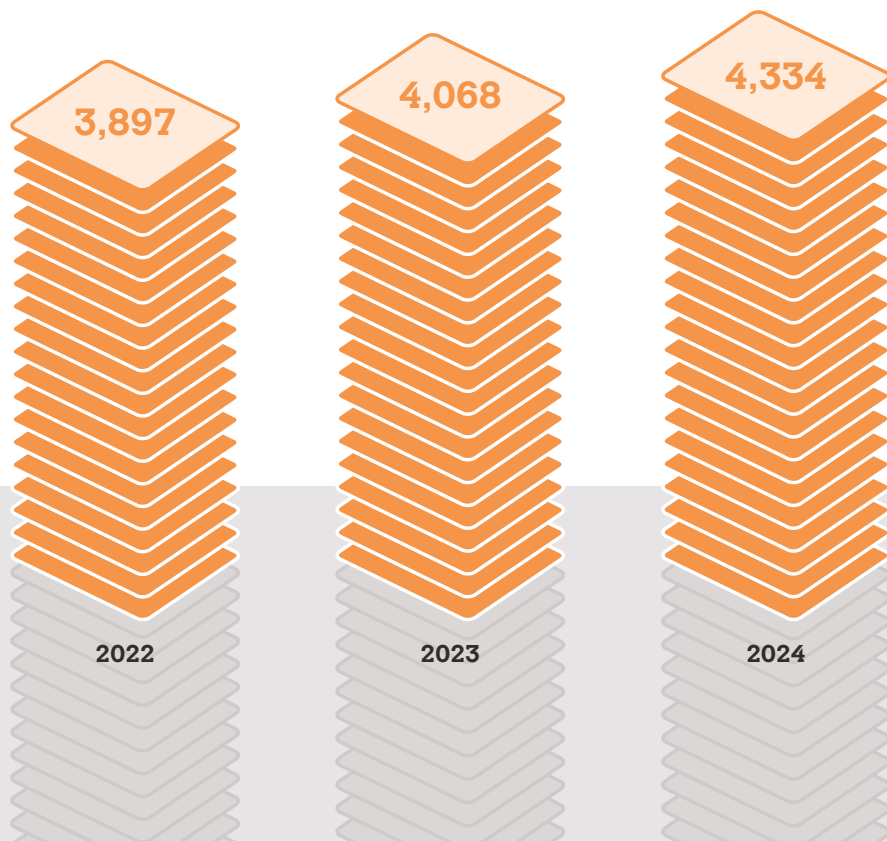
The TBT Committee's Transparency Working Group helped accelerate improvements to transparency practices by finalizing a practical guide on how to provide comments on draft regulations notified by members. It also took the lead in the development of guidelines for members to follow when communicating the overarching legal and institutional arrangements they have put in place to implement the TBT Agreement, such as where final regulations are published, who can be contacted with enquiries, etc.



## 6

**Notifications on product requirements**

WTO members submitted more than 4,300 notifications on product requirements in 2024, the highest annual total since 1995. Notifications are a form of advance notice, providing an opportunity for the WTO membership to comment on draft measures affecting trade in goods before they enter into force. Typically, notifications concern health or safety requirements or protection of the environment.

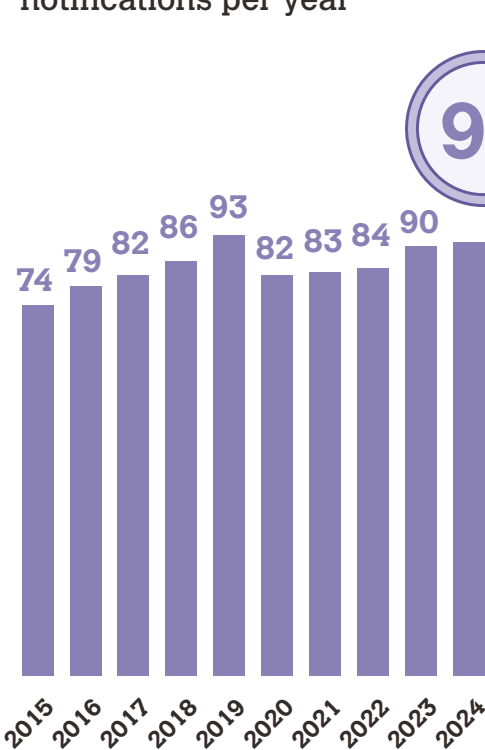
**Number of TBT notifications per year**

# 7

## Submission of notifications

A total of 91 members (over half of the WTO membership) submitted at least one notification in 2024. Most new notifications (86%) were submitted by developing and least-developed country members.

Number of members submitting notifications per year



Number of notifications submitted in 2024, by members' development status



## 8

**ePing's global reach**

ePing subscribers from 193 countries/territories received customized email alerts, enabling them to monitor and respond to potential regulatory changes affecting their products or markets of interest. These alerts provide a summary of WTO member notifications, outlining the covered products and comment deadlines, along with hyperlinks to further details.

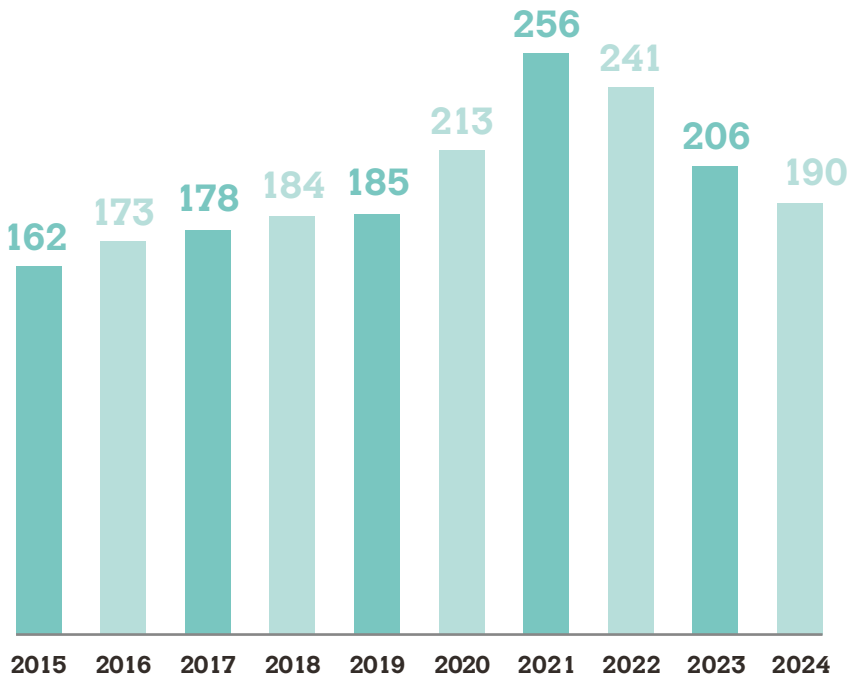


# 9

## Specific Trade Concerns (STCs)

The number of trade concerns raised at the TBT Committee has decreased annually by an average of 9% since 2021. Members have also reported growing progress in resolving these concerns. In 2024, progress was reported in resolving 10 STCs. Discussing concerns before a measure enters into force often helps prevent escalation into formal disputes. Most concerns arise in response to members' notifications. They range from requests for clarification to potential inconsistencies with the TBT Agreement.

Number of Specific Trade Concerns raised



10



13<sup>th</sup> WTO MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE  
ABU DHABI - UAE

2024

### Technical assistance

With 23 national and regional TBT-specific technical assistance (TA) activities successfully organized in 2024, the year marked a return to pre-COVID-19 TA-delivery levels. At MC13, members adopted a Ministerial Declaration stressing the importance of improving capacity building for developing members and the implementation of special and differential treatment for these economies.

● In-person  
● Virtual





## Further information

Further information about the implementation of the TBT Agreement is available in the 2024 Annual Review (G/TBT/58).



“Technical Barriers to Trade” – a publication in the WTO Agreements Series – provides an overview of the purpose and scope of the TBT Agreement, the types of measures it covers, and the key principles of the Agreement. It can be downloaded from the WTO website.

World Trade Organization  
Rue de Lausanne 154  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 739 51 11  
Email: [publications@wto.org](mailto:publications@wto.org)  
[www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

WTO Online Bookshop  
<http://onlinebookshop.wto.org>

© World Trade Organization 2025

Report designed by Triptik.  
Printed by the World Trade Organization.

