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NEW POLICY BRIEF:

The WTO Must Bounce Back

This [policy brief](#) surveys the state of the multilateral trading system, tracing the gradual decline of the Doha Round negotiations and the emergence of new regional and plurilateral initiatives.

These are dangerous times for the multilateral trading system. Never since its establishment in 1995 has the World Trade Organization been in such a perilous state. The shambolic 1999 Seattle Ministerial Conference previously represented the nadir in the fortunes of the organization but it rallied quickly afterwards and launched the Doha Round just two years later. Now no such recovery is in prospect. Dispute settlement apart, the WTO scene is characterised largely by drift and neglect, with no apparent light at the end of the tunnel.

It concludes that the model of the negotiations followed in the Round in recent years has been overtaken by events. It is however at this stage not clear whether the new initiatives now being pursued outside the WTO will have a catalytic effect on the multilateral trading system or will fragment it. There is a danger of squandering the legacy so painstakingly built up in the GATT and the early years of the WTO, which have contributed to decades of orderly and peaceful economic growth. For this reason it is vital that governments urgently take steps to rebuild confidence in the WTO. This confidence can be restored through governments committing themselves to a strategic dialogue leading to a new consensus on the objectives and general principles underpinning their activities in the WTO.

[Download the policy brief here](#)

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