

UK statement to the WTO Committee on Trade and the Environment

The UK is pleased to be able to provide an update to the Committee on planning for the COP26 UN climate conference.

On 28th May, the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), with the UK and its Italian partners, agreed new dates for the COP26 UN climate conference, which will now take place between 1 and 12 November 2021 in Glasgow. As COP president, together with our partner Italy, we see this as a crucial moment for the world to come together and commit to a climate resilient, zero carbon economy. This means more ambition to reduce emissions, more ambition to build resilience, and more ambition to cooperate and support one another.

In the wake of COVID-19, we need action through multilateral institutions – including the WTO – to support a clean, inclusive and resilient recovery that builds on the principles of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite the pandemic, the UK's commitment to urgent climate action has not wavered. As we work to protect our citizens and repair our economies, we must also act on climate change, and meet these two joint challenges together. In fact, coronavirus has provided a stark reminder of what happens when humanity's relationship with nature breaks down. As we recover, we have an opportunity to build back better in every sense. We must use this opportunity to protect and restore nature, whilst reducing our exposure to deadly viruses and climate impacts.

Our overarching goal at COP26 is to raise ambition at the country level. While we recognise the constraints that many countries are facing in light of the ongoing pandemic, we encourage all countries to make every effort to come forward as soon as possible, and well ahead of COP26, with more ambitious NDCs and long-term strategies. Coming out of COP25, the Climate Ambition Alliance has brought together countries, businesses, investors and other institutions committed to reaching net zero by 2050. The UK recently launched the 'Race to Zero' campaign to build on this success and to encourage others to make the same commitment.

The Committee on Trade and Environment is the place to bring together objectives on trade liberalisation and climate ambition and to ensure that these are mutually enabling. We want to see this CTE do this by facilitating discussions on how to remove barriers to trade in environmental goods and services, encouraging innovation in the low-carbon and circular economies, and ensuring transparency in relevant policies and regulations. We look forward to working with the Secretariat and Members on achieving those goals.