



Internet Association

Friday, December 8, 2017

Director General Roberto Azevedo
World Trade Organization
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Subject: Accreditation of Civil Society Experts to 11th Annual Ministerial Meeting

Director General Roberto Azevedo:

We represent trade associations who advocate for the Internet industry. Our members range from one person businesses to large multinational corporations. All of our members are interested in the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and some are involved in the upcoming Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires.

On some issues, we find common ground with members of civil society groups; on other issues, we have strong disagreements. But their viewpoints, insight, and advocacy are important to ensure that the discussions and any decisions made at the upcoming Ministerial reflect the broadest possible range of opinions and inputs. Civil society groups have been a consistent and important part of the WTO process for many years, and we strongly believe that they are an important part of the international trade process.

We were concerned to learn that, contrary to past practice, the Argentine government rescinded, on short notice, the visas of a number of non-governmental organizations. As you know, the WTO generally requires that the country hosting a Ministerial grant visas to generally accredited organizations. The grounds for denying visas have traditionally been quite narrow, and focused on denying entry only to those organizations who pose exceptional security risks.

We ask that you, and your organization, expeditiously review the reasons for this rescindment. It is important that the WTO ensure the broadest possible participation in its events, and reinforce that exclusion should be limited to cases of clear risk and based on the narrowest possible grounds.

We look forward to your response.

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