



**Director-General Roberto Azevêdo**

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File Reference: RP/WTO Ministerial

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6 December 2017

Dear Director-General Roberto Azevêdo,

**Decision to Rescind Accreditation for trade union and civil society representatives  
to the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Argentina**

In an unprecedented action, the Argentinian government has revoked the accreditation of 63 civil society experts — trade unionists, development advocates, digital rights activists, environmentalists and others — just days before the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Buenos Aires, advising the WTO that the experts will not be allowed into the country.

Civil society delegates and organizations from the following countries, many of whom have attended multiple WTO ministerial meetings in the past, were sent a note from the WTO Secretariat on 29 November, notifying them that the Argentinian government had denied the accreditation already issued by the WTO for: Argentina (Instituto del Mundo del Trabajo, Fundación Grupo Efecto Positivo, and Sociedad de Economía Crítica), Belgium (11.11.11), Brazil (Brazilian Network for People's Integration, REBRIP), Chile (Derechos Digitales), Finland (Siemenpuu), Indonesia (Institute for National and Democracy Studies), the Netherlands (Transnational Institute), the Philippines (People Over Profit), and the UK (Global Justice Now!), as well as delegates registered with international organizations, including UNI Americas and Friends of the Earth International.

Most of the rejected organizations work together through the global network Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS), which works for a sustainable, socially just and democratic multilateral trading system. It has also not gone unnoticed that, of the 20 organizations we understand have been

refused accreditation, only two are from corporations, whilst an overwhelming number of corporate representatives will be allowed accreditation.

The standard agreement between international organizations and the country hosting an international conference provides for accreditation, visas and entry to all those accredited by the international organizations — diplomats, media, observers from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

The agreement has a provision for the host country to refuse entry, but only on exceptional security considerations. However, based on the experience of the more than 250 members of OWINFS who have attended international meetings of the WTO, the United Nations and other fora, host countries have never denied entry, except for, at most, one or two specific persons, and with at least some justification provided. Previous WTO Ministerial meetings in Singapore, the United States, Qatar, Mexico, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Indonesia and Kenya did not see such repression.

If any host country starts limiting access and does so arbitrarily and without having to explain its motives, not only is the integrity of the conference being attacked, but a key principle of international diplomacy is also being violated. The WTO should not accept such a blatant violation of well-established international norms. If it does, it sets a precedent that will undermine its authority in future.

We have called on the Argentinian government to reverse the bans. However, if it does not do so, we call on you and the WTO membership not to hold the Ministerial in Argentina, unless the participation of the civil society groups is re-instated.

It is ironic that this occurred on the same day that Argentina is celebrating the transfer of the presidency of the G20 from Germany to Argentina. The banning of registered WTO delegates is an outrageous and disturbing precedent, not just for the WTO meeting itself, and for the G20 presidency of Argentina, but also for all future international meetings.

Yours sincerely,



ROSA PAVANELLI  
PSI General Secretary