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## **WITSA Seeks Recommitment of All Nations to Multilateral Trade Liberalization**

**Fairfax, VA, April 4, 2016:** The World Information Technology and Services has updated its Statement of Policy on International Trade in ICT Goods and Services”, urging all its members and their governments to redouble their efforts to establish and implement multilateral trade liberalization under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The paper strongly advocates that reducing and removing trade barriers that limit the availability or increase the cost of ICTs to end-users is a necessary requirement in fulfilling the promise of the *Digital Age* and calls for immediate actions to be taken by all WTO member nations to accede to the expanded Information Technology Agreement (ITA), and to participate in the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) and Environmental Goods Agreement negotiations.

WITSA Chairman Santiago Gutierrez stated that “our members, spanning 82 countries and representing the majority of the global IT marketplace, are very concerned about the real risk that the significant achievements in multilateral trade liberalization since 1948 might begin to erode, as nations become introspective and protective in the face of global financial and economic challenges.” “This is a serious and complex issue for the global business community, affecting not just the future of multilateral negotiations, but – equally important – the future of global trade rule making and dispute settlement”, continued Mr. Gutierrez.

Mr. Gutierrez urged all WTO member countries to sign on to and ensure prompt implementation of the newly expanded ITA, work towards prompt ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), encourage mobility of global talent, remove domestic regulations and standards which restrict trade and availability of ICTs and information services, and modernize rules for the ongoing business development of ICTs and enabled services – including cloud computing services, business intelligence services, cross border services, e-commerce, IPR, privacy, data protection, security, and taxation – that underpin the promise of the Digital Age.

WITSA’s efforts to update its milestone trade paper was led by Mr. R. Chandrashekhar, in his capacity as its Public Policy Chairman. He is also the President of the National Association of Software and Service Companies of India (NASSCOM). “We note an increasing tendency of national governments to enact regulations, develop technical standards, or establish conformance requirements relating to security and network attachment, which may act as non-tariff barriers and restrict trade in ICTs and information services. We urge governments to review the trade impact of these actions, and remove those that cannot be transparently justified in regards to article XIV of the GATS. Any disconnected national strategy impacts the global economy as a whole”, said Mr. Chandrashekhar. “Cross border data flows and free movement of high skilled talent globally have become crucial to the growth of international trade by enabling electronic delivery of services, promoting innovation, shorter production cycles, access to better products and services”, said Mr Chandrashekhar “WITSA supports free global mobility of high skilled talent. It opposes any

protectionist measures in this regard, or confusion with immigration issues. Nations that place barriers opposing the global exchange of talent are risking the success of their own businesses, economies, and societies. And those that have remained wedded to protectionist measures that curb the mobility of global talent or artificially raise the costs of skilled workers are putting their businesses and other institutions at a distinct disadvantage at home and in the global economy. WITSA urges support to global exchange of talent by allowing free movement of talent globally”, continued Mr. Chandrashekhar.

“Considering the extended WTO stalemate, WITSA recognizes that bilateral and plurilateral agreements are indeed important contributors to healthy and sustainable multilateral trade agreements and can lead to a broader discussion of new norms at the WTO”, said WITSA Secretary General Dr. Jim Poisant. However, Dr. Poisant cautioned that many nations turn away from the WTO by seeking to negotiate restrictive, preferential trade agreements (PTAs). “Unless these PTAs are open and transparent, clearly enabling the entry of other nations and regions over time, the WTO and the goal of global trade liberalization are weakened because these PTAs undermine the multilateral trade system and inevitably result in fragmentation that leads to inequality, and thus more, not less, trade barriers,” continued Dr. Poisant.

**The paper can be found on the WITSA web site at the following link: [http://witsa.org/witsa-wp-site/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WITSA Statement of Policy on International Trade 2016.pdf](http://witsa.org/witsa-wp-site/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WITSA_Statement_of_Policy_on_International_Trade_2016.pdf)**

#### **About WITSA:**

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) is the leading recognized international voice of the global ICT industry, whose members from over 80 countries and economies represent more than 90 percent of the world ICT market. WITSA is dedicated to advocating policies that advance industry growth and development; facilitating international trade and investment in ICT products and services; strengthening WITSA’s national industry associations; and providing members with a broad network of professional contacts.

WITSA members are leaders in a globally interconnected marketplace. Because the challenges facing the ICT industry are undisputedly global in nature, WITSA members work together to achieve a shared vision on important issues of common interest. WITSA makes it possible for its members — ranging from Mongolia and Argentina to Kenya and the United States — to identify common issues and priorities, exchange valuable information, and present a united position on industry issues. For more information on WITSA, please visit [www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)