

**Tile Council of America, Inc.**

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**FTAA - COMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE  
PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

**COVER SHEET**

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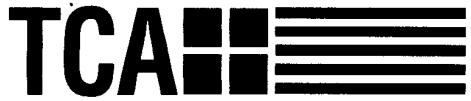
ISSUES ADDRESSED (Check all that apply)

Agriculture	Subsidies, Antidumping and Countervailing Duties	
Competition Policy	Civil Society	X
Dispute Settlement	Electronic Commerce	
Government Procurement	Smaller Economies	
Intellectual Property Rights	The FTAA Process	X
Investment	Other:	
Market Access		
Services		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With respect to the trade matters relating to the FTAA process as set forth in the Ministerial Declarations of San Jose and Toronto, the Tile Council of America ("TCA"), an industry association representing U.S. manufacturers of ceramic tile and certain of their raw material and equipment suppliers, submits its comments in response to the May 25, 2000 request for comments issued by the Trade Advisory Center.

TCA is concerned that the initiative to formalize the participation of non-governmental parties ("NGOs") may result in diversion of the resources and attention of the organization from its proper focus, i.e. the advancement of trade and economic relations between and among the member nations. Participation of NGOs through formal processes within the framework of the FTAA international trade negotiation process should not become a vehicle for debating the issues of special interest groups, notwithstanding the merits of the core issues of such special interest groups.



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May 29, 2000

Tripartite Committee  
Economic Commission for Latin America  
and the Caribbean (ECLAC)  
1825 K Street, N.W., Suite 1120  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Re: Key Revision to FTAA and Civil Society

Dear Sir/Madam:

On April 30, 1999, I wrote to Bryan Samuel, U.S. lead to the FTAA GCCS, in my capacity as Executive Director of Tile Council of America (TCA), which is the industry association representing domestic manufacturers of ceramic tile, and certain of their raw material and equipment suppliers. I wrote in response to Mr. Samuel's and the DOC Trade Advisory Center's request for comments to be addressed to the Free Trade of the Americas Government Committee on Civil Society (FTAA-GCCS) regarding the initiative to have the FTAA trade negotiation process include a mechanism for non-governmental parties (NGO's) to participate formally in the process and provide their views to the hemisphere's Trade Ministers when they met in November, 1999 and, presumably, throughout the negotiations. I am now writing to the Tripartite Committee in response to the May 25, 2000 request for similar comments issued by the Trade Advisory Center.

As a general matter, our industry is concerned that this formalization initiative for NGO participation in government-to-government trade negotiations is in response to pressure from various diverse special interest NGO's to capture the trade negotiation processes and make them vehicles for non-trade related or very tangentially related special interest issues. We believe that this is evidenced *ab initio* by the diverse agendas of certain of these organizations, which seem to be insisting upon assuming a place in every trade negotiation to forward their own agendas and organizational interests. This is not to say that these organizations' core issues are not of importance or appropriate subjects for concern. But basic economic/trade relation defining negotiations should not become vehicles for every environmental, conservation, human rights, social injustice, or other diverse societal agenda that separately may very well deserve attention and concern.

The phenomenon of making such issues required and expected components of every international economic trade negotiation seems to be becoming the accepted norm, which various NGO's are imposing upon what traditionally have been, and appropriately should be, government-to-government economic trade discussions. Numerous private organizations, not representing the manufacturing, labor, or production components of our economy directly affected by such economic trade negotiations, are assuming and demanding that they have an

equal or even dominant and veto-holding status in these discussions. This diverts, politicizes, polarizes, and captures such negotiations to make them vehicles for advancing the particular agendas of non-elected private and single-issue organizations, who do not necessarily speak for the American electorate on what are supposed to be the core economic trade issues and focus of various international trade negotiations. They are, to that extent, presuming to legitimize and possess a right to their own portfolio regarding these functions of government.

This phenomenon has evolved on an informal basis over the last decade to a situation where virtually every international government-to-government negotiation is visited with the insistent presence of essentially unrelated NGO special interest groups, no longer satisfied with having "booths in the lobby" or the receipt of briefings and the opportunity to offer comments, but demanding, in effect, to "be in the room." Not only is this non-representational government but it can become distracting and diverting for our government negotiators and, up to now, is not something provided for or contemplated by a representative government. These special NGO interests have no portfolio under statute or regulation and it would seem to be a dangerous precedent to undertake to formalize their participatory role through "civil society" administrative rulemaking or what is the equivalent thereof. Not only is it a distracting and impractical policy but one which likely is subject to legal challenge. Representing the U.S. government and its people in international economic trade negotiations is the mandate of elected and appointed administration officials, as a function of representational government. International economic and trade negotiations are not an exercise in a New England town meeting.

By formalizing in our international trade negotiation procedures, through administrative fiat, the creation of various "civil society" components to speak for their unique interests and agendas as alleged U.S. interests, there is a danger of giving a quasi-governmental voice to the most aggressive special interest NGO's, of abrogating the duty and role of elected and appointed government officials to conduct trade negotiations on behalf of the U.S. government and the electorate, and of replacing the already statutorily created and provided procedures for consultation with the private economic sector through, for example, the ISAC, IFAC, the IPAC system mandated by Congress.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Daniels