However facing challenges due to changing economic environments and the global economic crisis, some countries in the region have adopted protectionist measures that have reduced freedom of investment and the movement of capital and goods. BIAC strongly opposes such measures, and pledged its commitment to support efforts to improve the business environment.

The BIAC delegation, composed of representatives from MEDEF and the US-CIB in addition to Ms. Romano who participated through Confindustria, emphasised that business and governments from OECD and MENA countries must work closely together in order to counter the negative effects of the economic crisis and to achieve longer term objectives such as economic diversification, job creation and greater female participation in the labour market.

The Business Statement, jointly endorsed by BIAC and the Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM), BIAC’s Moroccan Observer organisation, details the recommended government actions as well as areas where the MENA-OECD business community committed support (available online at www.biac.org/policystatements.htm).

In addition, the just released publication OECD Observer contains an article by BIAC MENA Task Force Chair Gary Campkin entitled “Encouraging Investment”, which is focused on economic growth and development in the MENA region (www.oecdobserver.org).

For more information, please contact Jonathan Greenhill (greenhill@biac.org).

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**Empowering E-consumers: Strengthening Consumer Protection in the Internet Economy**

Over 200 business, consumer and government leaders gathered in Washington DC, on 8-10 December for an OECD conference organised on the 10th anniversary of the 1999 OECD Guidelines for Consumer Protection in the Context of E-Commerce.

Serving as an initial multi-stakeholder stocktaking of the Guidelines, the conference focused on identifying issues that should be taken under consideration for possible revision, as well as addressing opportunities and obstacles that have developed for consumers and industry alike in the global on-line marketplace.

Innovative on-line business models provide consumers with lower prices, easy price comparisons and product information, and a platform for consumer to consumer business (C2C) though business intermediaries. Sectors such as travel, banking and retail have flourished on-line and mobile e-commerce continues to grow. The interactive nature of e-commerce has served as an important means to build enhanced business customer relationships and extends customer services across online and offline retail environments.

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In Keynote presentations, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and US Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke emphasised the significant economic activity attributed to the Internet, its importance for small business, as well as the future of “green growth”.

FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz and US Ambassador to the OECD Karen Kornbluh welcomed the many new developments in on-line commerce, including consumer to consumer (C2C) commerce, and the relevance of competition, choice and convenience in continued growth of commerce online.

EBay CEO, Mr. John Donahoe, the business key note speaker, illustrated how the Internet today is empowering consumers as entrepreneurs. The global nature of the Internet as a commercial platform makes it a key driver for small business globalisation, and a source of job creation.

Fifteen additional business speakers from across sectors presented their views on benefits and challenges facing business online, stressing the importance of consumer relationships in the Internet economy.

Ms. Ronnie Goldberg, Executive Vice President and head of policy for USCIB, represented BIAC in an opening panel, emphasising the dynamic and positive nature of today’s business-consumer on-line engagement and the importance of policy frameworks that continue to allow e-commerce to grow.

Business, governments and consumers alike agreed to the importance of enhanced dialogue and co-operation to tackle issues such as fraudulent and misleading business, data protection concerns in new paradigms such as cloud computing and on-line security and digital piracy. Consumer education and enhanced enforcement online were also cited as important elements of improving confidence in e-commerce.

Looking ahead in spring 2010, BIAC will be engaged with the OECD Consumer Policy Committee as it reviews the outcomes of the conference and any potential needs for revision of the OECD Consumer Protection Guidelines, with the view to ensuring that they remain relevant for the next ten years.

For more information on this project and OECD work in the area of consumer policy please contact Nicole Primmer (primmer@biac.org).

International Tax in the 21st Century: The Role of the OECD

In an article originally appearing in the July-August 2009 issue of The Tax Executive, BIAC Tax Committee Chair Patrick Ellingsworth writes that with continued emphasis on building consensus among governments and other stakeholders in the various substantive projects, OECD Tax can continue to serve international trade and investment, and therefore world economic growth, effectively.