Why International Organizations Matter to Your Business

The private sector has a lot to offer in helping the UN and other agencies reach their goals.

Risks from over-regulation across every industry and every geography impact mission-critical processes essential to business operations. Around the world, inter-governmental organizations (IGO) – including, but not limited to, those in the United Nations system – play an important role in economic and social development. In so doing they exert substantial influence on national laws, policies and regulations. So how can business better engage with these bodies? This is something we think about a lot at USCIB.

In an ideal world, governments would view business as a full and essential partner in determining global governance but many multilateral rules-setting organizations do not have a recognized channel for hearing from the business community. The challenges facing society today – climate change and energy, globalization on every level, meeting the sustainable development agenda, international tax laws and much more – cannot be solved by governments without the full participation of business. USCIB carries that message wherever we go to ensure business has a seat at the table.

USCIB’s unique global network of the three main international business organizations provides a direct channel for the views of U.S. business in leading IGOs. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE), and Business at OECD (still often referred to as BIAC, reflecting its former name of Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD), provide unparalleled opportunities for American business to listen and learn, to advocate, and to impact the international agenda in such areas as trade policy, conditions for investment, the environment, human rights and tax policy, to name but a few.

Indeed, the role of the private sector in the United Nations system recently got a whole lot more visible when ICC gained top-level observer status in the UN General Assembly. This is a major achievement: ICC is the only business organization to achieve such recognition – signifying an important commitment by UN member states to work closely with the private sector, and elevating ICC’s status by providing a direct voice in the UN’s most representative body.

A forward-looking agenda

In today’s world, policy makers and regulatory authorities need to understand how global business operates, and how to maximize the private sector’s positive role in fostering economic growth, job creation, environmental sustainability and improved well-being. In some cases, agencies appear to be reluctant to engage with specific industries or the business community more broadly and insinuate that – because business must be profit-driven – they cannot be humane and sensitive to the needs of society.

Yet it is only the IGOs that have the reach to impact changes on a global level and create a level playing field where government, business and civil society work together to create sustainable and equitable solutions to the challenges facing the world today. That is why it is important to stay engaged and work to drive the changes in key IGOs, to take advantage of and to inform the most important intergovernmental policy deliberations on priority issues for business.

The challenges facing society today cannot be solved by governments without the full participation of business.

USCIB has done just that. In recent years, in addition to supporting ICC’s expanded role in UN deliberations, we have built a strong rapport with key international agencies through direct engagement in the UN Environment Program, the UN climate talks, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and other international bodies, allowing us greater influence on policy on behalf of our 300 American multinational manufacturing and services members operating worldwide in more than 170 countries. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen our relationship with other IGOs where our members’ priority interests are at stake. This includes of course the OECD and the International Labor Organization, through our longtime partners in BIAC and IOE, in order to address issues ranging from tax, investment and ICT policy to supply chains and business and human rights.

USCIB continues to improve coordination with the State Department, the U.S. Trade Representative and other key U.S. government agencies, U.S. ambassadors and missions to key IGOs, as well as developing cooperative ties with the new administration in Washington while supporting American business engagement with the UN secretariat in New York and Geneva on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and a variety of other issues.

Drawing on our internationally known policy experts, experience and unique global network, we provide our members essential intelligence and a seat at the table to proactively address specific risks to global commercial operations and promote policies that support economic growth and job creation. You can look forward to further reports from the front lines in the coming months, and we welcome your suggestions as to where and how we should be concentrating our efforts.

Contact Peter Robinson at (212) 703-5046 or probinson@uscib.org.
In July, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) released its objectives for modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). While many of the issues proposed in USCIB’s submission were included, some of the objectives leave out references to key business priorities such as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS).

USCIB had released its recommendations on NAFTA a month prior, calling on the Trump administration to update the 23 year-old pact to accommodate new realities in global commerce, including the rise of the digital economy, while keeping what works from the original agreement.

“Our member companies, who collectively encompass America’s most successful enterprises on the global stage, strongly support modernization of NAFTA,” said USCIB President and CEO Peter M. Robinson. “But the fact of the matter is that a great many businesses base their success on increasingly seamless integration of the North American trading space,” he added. “U.S. negotiators need to start from the premise that three-way trade and investment among the NAFTA partners should be enhanced, not restricted. A modernization effort must include strong investment protection provisions, including effective ISDS. We encourage USTR to maintain an intensive dialogue with affected U.S. stakeholders, including business, as they flesh out more detailed objectives, strategies and priorities.”

USCIB calls upon the administration to update and strengthen key NAFTA provisions, including the liberalization and protection of investment flows, protection of intellectual property, trade facilitation and improved agricultural market access. It also recommends tackling new areas not included or anticipated in the original agreement a quarter-century ago, such as the digital provision of goods and services, data localization requirements, treatment of state-owned enterprises. It further urges U.S. negotiators to work closely with a range of private-sector stakeholders to ensure that a revamped agreement meets business needs in the 21st century.

The USCIB statement notes that, since NAFTA’s implementation, U.S. trade with Canada and Mexico has more than tripled, with a positive impact on U.S. GDP of 0.5%, or several billion dollars of added growth per year.

USCIB says that several areas currently covered by the agreement require modernization, including rules on intellectual property protection, regulatory cooperation, services market access, and customs and trade facilitation. Language agreed during the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations provides a useful foundation on these topics upon which to build for NAFTA modernization, as Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer have remarked. In other areas where NAFTA disciplines have stood the test of time, USCIB is urging the administration to focus on ensuring that those provisions not be weakened.

In addition to the statement released by USCIB, Shaun Donnelly, vice president for trade and finance, presented USCIB views at the “NAFTA Testimony” hearings held in June at the International Trade Commission (ITC). While held at the ITC, USTR was running the three days of public hearings. Staff from Commerce, State, Treasury, Department of Homeland Security, and Agriculture also sat on the panel and joined in questioning presenters.

Donnelly’s testimony stemmed USCIB’s written submission. “By all means, update, modernize,” said Donnelly. “But do the update quickly, seriously, tri-laterally, in transparent manner, based on real issues of concern to the U.S. business community not with a political focus on bilateral trade balances or imposing unilateral trade barriers,” Donnelly concluded. “Work with U.S. business, we want to be partners in this important exercise.”
USCIB Disappointed by US Withdrawal From the Paris Climate Agreement

With news of President Donald Trump breaking over the summer that the Trump administration will begin the process of withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, USCIB issued the following statement:

"Like many others in the U.S. business community, USCIB is disappointed by the news that the Trump administration has elected to leave the Paris Climate Agreement. In our view, this decision could leave U.S. companies unprotected and exposed to possible discrimination under the Paris Agreement if the U.S. government is not at the table. We encourage the administration to reform areas of the UN climate framework toward more fair, transparent and balanced approaches that are responsive to U.S. circumstances and aspirations.

The Paris Agreement is redefining global markets for energy and environmental goods and services, as well as providing major economic stimuli for companies. U.S. energy security and access were never threatened by the Paris Agreement, which allows each national government to define its own climate action plan. Moreover, the U.S. stands to benefit from trade and investment opportunities that the Paris Agreement will set in motion.

"We are interested to learn more about how the U.S. will pursue new arrangements while remaining in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. While it does so, we encourage the U.S. to stay involved on behalf of U.S. economic interests, and to bring U.S. solutions to this crucial global effort. We encourage the administration to reform areas of the UN climate framework toward more fair, transparent and balanced approaches that are responsive to U.S. circumstances and aspirations.

"USCIB members are committed to advancing sustainable development and environmental solutions through international cooperation, and have supported the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement since their inception. Multilateral forums and cooperative approaches are the best way to address the transboundary challenges of energy access and innovation, climate change and sustainable development. In close coordination with our global business partners, including the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Major Economies Business Forum (BizMEF), USCIB will continue to champion U.S. business interests in the UNFCCC, and will seek opportunities to promote U.S. environment and energy solutions through business engagement and implementation, and to broadly deploy climate-friendly investment and innovation.

"USCIB has represented U.S. business interests in the UN climate negotiations for over 25 years, and during that time has benefited from the diligent efforts of U.S. government representatives at the table to advance and defend U.S. business interests, often under challenging conditions. We express thanks to the current U.S. climate negotiating team, and others with whom we have worked, for their extraordinary efforts on our behalf."

USCIB will continue to work closely with the Administration to advance U.S. business interests in the overall UNFCCC, particularly in informing the development of climate treaty procedures to track and verify national actions. USCIB will stay closely involved with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Major Economies Business Forum (BizMEF) to advance substantive business involvement by all sectors on climate policy and action with the Moroccan, Fijian and Polish treaty presidencies. In preparation for the UN’s landmark global stocktaking of climate efforts in 2018, USCIB members will continue to emphasize the importance of appropriate policies to advance climate action, energy security and technological innovation through international cooperation and open trade.

OECD Week Addresses Global Challenges With Business Input

USCIB President and CEO Peter Robinson was in Paris in June for OECD Week, which tackled issues such as international tax rules, globalization challenges and anti-trade rhetoric.

Addressing Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs at the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, Business at OECD (BIAC) Chair Phil O’Reilly called on governments to address the challenges of strengthening growth and boosting economic participation, emphasizing that “ultimately societies can only support economic openness, when it is accompanied by appropriate domestic policies to prepare people for change, with better skills and more opportunities for economic participation.” O’Reilly drew upon principles highlighted in BIAC’s 2017 Statement to Ministers, which contains the core business recommendations to strengthen open economies and inclusive societies.

Speaking at the session on International Trade and Investment for the Benefit for All, Business at OECD (BIAC) Vice Chair and USCIB Board member Charles R. Johnston (Citi) encouraged governments to counteract on protectionist action in the form of growing non-tariff barriers, and pointed to areas where new OECD work would help better inform this debate. Business also emphasized that governments should fully use the OECD Investment Restrictiveness Index and implement the Policy Framework for Investment.
B20 Summit Attendees Reaffirm Commitment to Open Trade

USCIB’s President and CEO Peter M. Robinson was among 700 representatives from the B20 in Berlin that met for the final summit in May of the German B20 Presidency, which focused on “Resilience, Responsibility, Responsiveness – Towards a Future-oriented, Sustainable World Economy.”

Among the many meetings that took place during the summit was an International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) G20 CEO Advisory Group that was facilitated by ICC Germany. The meeting was chaired by ICC Secretary General John Danilovic and brought together Group members at both Deputy and CEO levels, with representatives from ICC Argentina, ICC Germany, ICC United Kingdom, and USCIB’s Robinson.

The meeting of the ICC Group was able to benefit from the participation of B20 Germany Sherpa Stormy-Annika Mildner who provided a detailed briefing of B20 activities and lessons learned thanking ICC for its sustained and substantive participation in the B20 task forces and working groups. The B20 recommendations were presented to Chancellor Angela Merkel and sent to B20 members. She explained the G20/B20 “compact with Africa” initiative – a partnership between the B20/G20 and 5 African countries (the Ivory Coast, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia) to improve sustainable private sector development in African countries.

The B20 recommendations Boosting Investment in Africa - Towards Inclusive Compacts in Africa were signed in Berlin by the majority of the B20 taskforce and cross-thematic group Chairs and Co-Chairs, including Robinson. The “African Economic Outlook” is an annual report produced by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the OECD Development Centre and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The B20 Summit officially got underway with remarks by B20 Chairman Jurgen Heraeus who emphasized that the B20 managed to craft consensual positions on all major issues. The B20 was united in its belief that trade increases prosperity worldwide, that protectionist policies are misguided and that policies are needed to help people who felt left behind by trade and technological change.

The B20 Task Force on Employment and Education makes recommendations to the G20, promotes open, dynamic and inclusive labor markets, harnessing the potential of technological change through better education and training, and creating a global level playing field and promotion of fair competition for globally operating companies. The task force’s leaders recognize the need to address unemployment, raise labor force participation, improve education and work-force qualification and create framework conditions for quality jobs to ensure sustainable economic and financial development.

“With a high level of unemployment globally, employment and education have become core topics of the G20 and the B20,” said Robinson. “To address employment and training gaps, we [the B20 Employment and Education Taskforce] released a series of recommendations on investing in skills development, implementing commitments such as the ILO G20 training strategy and using technology as a complementary tool to improve access and adaption.”

B20-L20 Delivers Joint Statement to G20 Labor Ministers

The B20 and L20 presented a joint statement at a G20 labor ministers dinner in May in Bad Neuenahr, Germany which was attended by USCIB Senior Counsel Ronnie Goldberg, International Organization of Employers (IOE) Secretary General Linda Kromjong and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Secretary General Sharan Burrow jointly presented the statement to the ministers and all B20 and L20 signatories at the handover ceremony to German Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Andrea Nahles.

This year’s statement builds on the IOE/Business at OECD (BIAC) and ITUC/Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) statement from last year with a specific focus on sustainable growth, decent work and social cohesion in the digital economy.

In line with the key priorities of the G20 German presidency, the statement reinforces the important role that business and labor have in shaping policies that not only maximize the opportunities for employment creation, but that also minimize adverse effects on employment and working conditions. Given the special focus on the digital economy, the recommendations in the statement are linked to the impact of technological change on employment and call on governments to grab the chances that technological change presents as well as address its challenges.

Going forward, the workforce using new technology needs to be well equipped for the new digital age. This requires taking a fresh approach to education, up- and re-skilling and ensuring that all individuals have access to opportunities that allow them to continually upgrade their skills. The B20/L20 joint understanding on key elements of quality apprenticeships, the G20 Skills Strategy as well as the G20 Apprenticeship Initiative clearly have a key role to play in modernizing existing training systems.
Business Steps Up for Sustainable Development

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) were created to measure progress and achievements towards a sustainable future through a series of 17 goals adopted by the UN General Assembly under the moniker Agenda 2030. During this year’s annual UN High-Level Political Forum, held from July 10 – 19 at UN headquarters in New York, the UN Secretariat worked with member states to discuss paths to implementation and to track progress on the SDGs. USCIB and its members were on the ground during the HLPF highlighting the role of engaging all business sectors to advancing environmental, economic and social cooperation for the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

USCIB Vice President for Product Policy and Innovation Mike Michener supported USCIB’s longtime partner, the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN), on their event focusing on SDG2, Ending Hunger, during their side-event, Agriculture and Food Day on July 13. IAFN partnered with leading organizations to host this event to brainstorm around the role of the agricultural and food sector in relation to the implementation of the SDGs. Agriculture and Food Day summarized the importance of targeting the agricultural sector and food issues to reach the SDGs by 2030. IAFN has been a consistent champion for a stand-alone goal on sustainable agriculture and food security.

However, “solutions cannot address just one goal, but must look to make a difference to several at once,” noted Michener. “The purpose of Agriculture and Food Day was to examine how focusing on agricultural and food policy could achieve not only Goal 2 but make substantive contributions to the achievement of the other 16 goals. Investments made in agriculture — the dominant occupation for the world’s poorest people — can accomplish much beyond Goal 2, including improvements in health, incomes, trade, infrastructure, and the environment,” he said.

USCIB policy experts and members also joined the SDG Business Forum on July 18, the first business-organized meeting held in the UN’s General Assembly Hall. Speakers from the UN, governments, NGOs and business discussed private sector investment, information sharing and public-private partnership to take forward the 17 SDGs. The Forum was organized by the Global Business Coalition for 2030, a coalition of major business organizations and the UN Global Compact, facilitated by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

Speaking to the HLPF, USCIB Vice President for Strategic International Engagement, Energy and Environment Norine Kennedy stated, “Innovation, infrastructure, economic growth and empowerment and good governance are the four inter-linked cornerstones for all 17 SDGs for business. Therefore it is crucial to consult with private sector groups at the national and regional level to develop enabling frameworks for business actions to advance the SDGs,” she said. Over 40 countries submitted national reports this year on their progress towards the SDGs.

Many of the speakers echoed the sentiment that neither the SDG’s nor the wider 2030 Agenda can be achieved without active participants of non-state actors, including business and industry, to drive inclusive economic growth and prosperity.

In his remarks to the HLPF, ICC Secretary General John Danilovich noted, “There can be no doubt that the private sector means business when it comes to the SDG’s. Since their inception, I’ve said the SDG’s should be known as the BDG’s, the Business Development Goals, and that’s because their achievement represents a clear economic imperative. Business engagement on the UN SDG’s is not only a powerful way to enhance society’s trust but also a great business opportunity. Achieving the SDG’s opens up $12 trillion in market opportunity in sectors such as food, energy, health and cities.”

For this year’s HLPF, USCIB members, including Bechtel, Cargill, Citi, Hilton, Monsanto, Novozymes and Pirelli, added new examples of actions to advance the SDGs to USCIB’s Business-for-2030 web platform.

USCIB’s Vice President for ICT Policy Barbara Wanner also attended an event, Accelerating Women’s Economic Empowerment to Achieve the 2030 Agenda, which was organized by ICC and UN Women – the global champion for gender equality. For many women around the world, ICT’s can be leveraged for personal security, better access to education and jobs, financial inclusion and access to basic healthcare information. But benefits such as these rely on women having meaningful access to ICT which can be facilitated or prevented by several factors, including affordability, relevant content, skills and security. The event showcased the global efforts stakeholders have embarked on to bring women’s economic empowerment to the forefront of all the SDG targets.

“Through innovation, investment and development of products and services, the private sector plays an important role in advancing gender equality and improving the lives of women,” said Wanner.

In the run-up to the HLPF, USCIB also organized a ‘Business for SDGs’ roundtable on Infrastructure, focusing on SDG 9 in Washington DC. The event, which was also held on the margins of the UN Financing for Development Infrastructure Forum, drew participants from government and business, including USCIB member companies AT&T, Bechtel, Citi, KPMG, MasterCard, and Monsanto as well as the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, NGO groups such as the Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation, and U.S. government representatives, notably Ambassador Lisa Kubiske from the U.S. Department of State who gave closing remarks.

The roundtable discussed obstacles to and best practices in public private partnerships for infrastructure projects, challenges in removing barriers or dealing with corruption, and the importance of scaling U.S. business investment.
Wider Business Role Urged at UN Development Finance Forum

The second UN Financing for Development (FID) Forum took place in May at UN headquarters in New York, serving as follow-up to the inaugural FID Forum in 2015. The 2017 Forum provided impetus for the implementation of FID outcomes and the delivery of means of implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event featured expert segments on the seven action areas of the Addis Agenda, as well as other specific issues that UN member states mandated the FID Forum to address. It also featured a dedicated dialogue with stakeholders, including business and industry.

Numerous business representatives took part both as panelists and speaking from the floor, including John Danilovich, secretary general of ICC and Ariel Meyerstein, senior vice president, corporate responsibility, Citi. USCIB Vice President for Energy and Environment Norine Kennedy gave remarks during the segment on trade, capacity building, technology and innovation, noting the increasing role the private sector has been taking with regards to mobilizing finance, investment, solutions and expertise for sustainable development, as well as the increasing role of business in the evolution to an SDG-guided international framework of cooperation and implementation.

“Trade is a powerful vehicle for development, and it also creates a network for broad deployment of innovative technologies and knowhow,” Kennedy said. However, she acknowledged that much remains to be done to deliver practical results and to implement programs and enabling environments that will allow the business community to contribute more significantly, noting, “the level and scope of engagement need to be radically scaled up from business communities in developing countries.”
BIAC Releases Paper on “Trade as a Priority for All”

As populist discontent with international trade continues to percolate around the world, Business at OECD (BIAC) unveiled a new paper in April, “Trade as a Priority for All,” with recommendations for OECD action to help build renewed support for cross-border trade. In December 2016, Business at OECD convened a workshop of heads of communications from its member federations around the world, to consider ways to push back against the populist narrative. It consulted with its global membership, a network of over 2,800 business experts, and identified critical trade barriers and opportunities. The paper makes recommendations to the OECD and its member governments on the role they can play in curbing barriers and enabling opportunities.

The paper also provides a better understanding of the way companies do business, shedding light on the hurdles they face at the border and in the global marketplace and provides recommendations on improving policymaking and creating better conditions for private sector-led growth, innovation and job creation.

Goldberg Gives Keynote at ILO Women in Business Conference

USCIB Senior Counsel Ronnie Goldberg was a keynote speaker at an ILO Latin American Regional Conference on Women in Business and Management, held in May in Lima, Peru. Over 300 attendees were drawn from virtually every country of Latin America and the Caribbean. Goldberg’s speech drew from the findings of a series of BIAC reports, such as the report on Putting All Our Minds to Work: Harnessing the Gender Dividend and Putting All Our Ideas to Work: Women and Entrepreneurship, that highlight the business case for women’s economic empowerment and identify best practices and practical policy recommendations for advancing women’s roles in the workplace.

USCIB and ILO Hold Dialogue on Disabilities in the Workplace

U.S. companies are increasingly sensitive to the importance of enhancing workplace diversity, particularly for people with disabilities. In an effort to promote U.S. company membership in the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN), USCIB, AT&T and the ILO held an event at the AT&T Forum in Washington DC in June for business leaders, “Promoting disability inclusion globally.”

USCIB Senior Counsel Ronnie Goldberg gave opening remarks and facilitated a panel on “Best Practices in the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Global South,” which also featured speakers from L’Oreal, Repsol, Accenture and Cisco.

Goldberg noted that USCIB members are global enterprises, with employees and customers in every part of the world. “The network and opportunities for best practice and information sharing provided by the ILO GBDN can be an important resource for MNEs as they devise and implement their human resource, product development, and marketing strategies in diverse communities across the globe,” she said.

The event also featured USCIB members from Deloitte, Boeing and Accenture.
Celebrating 80 Years of the ICC Marketing Code

USCIB and others in the ICC family are celebrating this year’s 80th anniversary of ICC’s Consolidated Code of Marketing and Advertising Communication Practice. ICC presented the Code in June during a networking cocktail hosted in partnership with the French Association of the Communications Agencies, at the French Camp Cannes. The event followed the semi-annual meeting of ICC’s Commission on Marketing and Advertising, which took place in Paris in June and was chaired by Brent Sanders, associate general counsel with Microsoft and chair of USCIB’s Marketing and Advertising Committee. According to USCIB Vice President Jonathan Hunke, at the ICC commission meeting in Paris, members discussed possible revision of the Code in the coming years to more fully reflect changes in technology and advertising practice, and finalized a draft ICC guide on responsible mobile marketing communications.

Giblin Attends ICC Customs, Trade Meetings in Dubai

USCIB’s Director for Customs and Trade Facilitation Megan Giblin was in Dubai last week attending ICC-UAE and Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry co-hosted Customs and Trade Facilitation Forum. The Forum discussed a wide range of topics including Trade Digitalization, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the Gulf Cooperation Council value-added Tax Implementation Framework. The UAE was the first country in the Arab world to ratify the WTO’s TFA, which entered into force earlier this year and promises to boost global trade flows by over $1 trillion this year and generate opportunities for easier, less costly cross-border trade.

USCIB Meets With Labor Secretary Acosta, Officials at CBP and State

USCIB President and CEO Peter M. Robinson was in Washington in May for several high-level meetings with key U.S. government officials, including with the Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta. Robinson was joined by USCIB’s Senior Vice President for Policy and Government Affairs Rob Mulligan and USCIB Senior Counsel Ronnie Goldberg. The meeting focused on preparations for the G20 Labor and Employment Ministers meeting in Bad Neuenahr, Germany, as well as the Global Employers Summit. Robinson raised the recent recommendations of the B20 Labor and Employment taskforce on which he serves as a Co-Chair.

Acosta and USCIB’s representatives discussed ways to highlight U.S. government and business leadership in Business at OECD’s work on women’s participation in the workforce, as well as the ILO’s work on apprenticeships. USCIB also teamed up with the Department of Labor to support a social media campaign around the G20 labor ministerial on how governments can do a better job of matching training and skills development with the needs of employers.

Robinson also met with Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection Kevin McAleenan, who has been nominated by President Trump to serve as commissioner. Robinson was joined by USCIB staff and several member company representatives including the chair of the USCIB Customs Committee, Jerry Cook, who is vice president for government and trade relations at Hanesbrands. During the meeting, USCIB member representatives identified various issue areas of concern related to customs valuation, implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, engagement with the work of the World Customs Organization, and continued progress and eventually closure on ACE, forced labor, e-commerce, and more.

Finally, Robinson met with Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Patricia Haslach. A number of member companies again joined the USCIB team for this meeting to discuss a range of concerns with the attitudes of many international organizations towards business engagement and the need for the U.S. government to counter some of the negative trends.

USCIB Delivers Statement on Trade Deficit at Commerce

As the Trump administration seeks to reorient U.S. trade policy toward bilateral agreements, bilateral trade deficits have been put forward as a marker of the health — or lack thereof — of U.S. commercial relations with a given country. USCIB took up this issue in a statement to the Department of Commerce, as well as a public testimony that was delivered by USCIB’s Director for Investment, Trade, and Financial Services Eva Hampl in May at the Department of Commerce.

In her testimony, Hampl emphasized USCIB’s view that trade deficits are a product of broader macroeconomic factors, not trade policy, and that the trade balance should not be viewed as a straightforward indicator of a country’s economic health. “While it is useful to address trade barriers that impede access for U.S. goods and services exporters to specific markets, we should not set up bilateral trade balances as the metric of successful trade policies,” she said.

Robinson Joins 200 Business Leaders in Letter on International Affairs Budget

Ahead of the release of President Trump’s 2018 proposed budget that is looking to cut up to 31 percent of the State Department and USAID budget, USCIB’s President and CEO Peter M. Robinson joined over 200 business leaders in sending a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The letter urged Tillerson to strongly support the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development Budget.

The letter emphasized the importance of partnerships between the private sector and these agencies, noting that these agencies catalyze and leverage private sector expertise and resources to create sustainable solutions at scale on a range of challenges such as energy, health, and agriculture.
USCIB Roundtable Explores Promise of Apprenticeships

Given the role that apprenticeships play in supporting the development of business-ready skills for youth and in realizing goals of inclusive economic growth and an equitable transition to a more sustainable world, The USCIB Foundation, which is the educational and research arm of USCIB, partnered with Citi and the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN) and organized a roundtable in July in New York focusing on apprenticeship models and practices in the U.S. The roundtable included representatives of approximately 25 companies who are either actively implementing apprenticeship programs or are interested in getting started. John Ladd, the administrator for the Office of Apprenticeship of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) joined the meeting.

Ladd, who gave keynote remarks, discussed the context of what is driving interest in apprenticeships in the United States. “It would have been hard to imagine this conversation happening 10 years ago,” said Ladd. What changed? In particular, Ladd noted, unemployment is decreasing yet millions are still underemployed or unemployed and there is a clear mismatch between employers with jobs that have certain skills requirements and people in the sidelines who don’t yet have those skills. To address these challenges, employers – in partnership with government and educational institutions like community colleges – have identified apprenticeships as an effective means to help provide a path to employment for workers and to fill their own hiring needs with workers with the right skills for their jobs. The Executive Order on apprenticeships recently signed by President Donald Trump provides a framework for the key role USDOL will play in supporting business in this key area.

ILO Conference Highlights: Labor Migration, Climate Change

USCIB Vice President for Corporate Responsibility and Labor Affairs Gabriella Rigg Herzog was among approximately 6,000 delegates who attended the 106th session of the International Labor Conference (ILC) in Geneva, Switzerland in June. The ILC touched upon pressing global issues such as the application of labor standards, peace and stability, women in the workplace, immigration and climate change. Herzog attended the ILC as a member of the U.S. Employers Delegation, headed by Ed Potter, USCIB senior counsel and U.S. employer spokesperson to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Governing Body.

Herzog gave remarks at the Committee for Labor Migration, emphasizing the important role the ILO has to play in ensuring that labor migration policies are grounded in sound facts in order to assist governments in devising and implementing policies in ways that work for both employers and workers.

“Labor migration is a necessary and important phenomenon,” said Herzog in her remarks. “It can help fulfill personal aspirations, balance labor supply and demand, spark innovation, and develop and transfer skills. But for workers to be able to move of their own volition, where and when their labor is needed and valued, and with their rights protected, governments must have clear, transparent and efficient migration policies.”

Additionally, Potter delivered a statement during the 2017 Plenary Statement on the Director General’s report on behalf of business regarding climate change and the Paris Agreement, noting concern regarding language in the Director General’s Report that seems to over-simplify the challenge ahead, portraying a straightforward “green” vs. “dirty” choice of technologies, industries, products and jobs. “The reality is more complex, and there are many other stakeholders involved – notably consumers,” said Potter. “The fact is that all industry sectors will need to transition to cleaner and more efficient operations and energy sources. The scale of transformation required to meet Paris commitments cannot be met without business finding ways to respond to growing populations seeking reliable affordable energy sources to run businesses, schools, hospitals, etc.”

Potter’s full statement can be found on the USCIB website.
Which of the following could limit your company’s success in foreign markets?

A. Allowing someone else to price your goods or services  
B. Only buying or selling in U.S. Dollars  
C. Not hedging foreign currency

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Annual OECD Tax Conference Showcases Reform

Against the backdrop of new global tax rules developed under the BEPS Action Plan and efforts to advance tax reform in the United States, USCIB members and others from the business community gathered in Washington, DC. in June for the 12th annual OECD International Tax Conference. Organized by USCIB in concert with the 35-nation Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, as well as Business at OECD (BIAC), the conference has grown into an annual must-attend event for tax practitioners, experts and regulators from around the world.

With an eye toward the direction of possible U.S. tax reform, including reduction of the top corporate tax rate from the current 35 percent, Pascal Saint-Amans, director of the OECD’s Center for Tax Policy and Administration, told conference-goers that he expects most OECD economies to adopt corporate tax rates in the 20-30 percent range. Saint-Amans said there may be some exceptions, including in the UK, where top rates may drop below 20 percent.

Other speakers picked up the theme. “The current U.S. system is broken,” said Mark Prater, chief tax counsel and deputy staff director of the Senate Finance Committee, during keynote luncheon remarks. “Tax reform is a difficult political transaction,” he observed, but “the U.S. sits at a crossroads of reform, which is an opportunity that has not been available in a generation.”

Over the course of the two-day conference, which took place at the Four Seasons Hotel, participants discussed tax policy trends, current tax reform, tax uncertainty, digitalization, increases in intangible assets, and dealing with tax-related disputes through arbitration. They also focused on transfer pricing as well as the OECD’s new multilateral instrument, signed in Paris.

“The conference provides a real opportunity for dialogue between business, governments, and the OECD,” said USCIB Vice President and International Tax Counsel Carol Doran Klein. “This year, because the focus is now on BEPS implementation, there was good discussion of opportunities to improve tax certainty, including a pilot International Compliance Assurance Program, Advanced Pricing Agreements and an improved Mutual Agreement Procedure.”

On the multilateral instrument, Will Morris, chair of the BIAC Committee on Taxation and Fiscal Affairs, told Bloomberg BNA: “Many of us in the business community doubted the OECD would get the consensus necessary for a document of this scope and substance. But they have, and [the multilateral instrument] opens the door to changes in the tax treaty process, and to a number of key international tax rules, that are significant.”

USCIB Roundtable Explores Promise of Apprenticeships

continued from page 10

The hour-long breakout session led to a collaborative discussion among companies, nonprofits and NGO’s in attendance on both solutions and common challenges that need to be addressed, such as the need to educate students, communities and families about the benefits of apprenticeships in lieu of 2-year or 4-year post-secondary options. Other challenges raised by participants included issues around the definitions of apprenticeships as well as the need to create technological solutions and compelling marketing schemes that will resonate with millennials. Many participants agreed on the important role of government, both local and national, as a convener, citing the United Kingdom as a good role model for public private partnership in enabling successful apprenticeship programs.

“It’s very clear that we’re preaching about benefits of apprenticeships to the converted,” said USCIB’s Senior Counsel Ronnie Goldberg during her concluding remarks and summary of the roundtable. “We must now leverage the enthusiasm and expertise as evidenced in this workshop to drive positive change within our companies and communities. Apprenticeships will enable young people to have jobs and a career, but also provide companies with talent for the future.”

The event was hosted by the Citi Foundation.
ATA Carnets Paper Processing Moves Into the 21st Century

The World Customs Organization (WCO) has endorsed the launching of a pilot in 2018 of a digital ATA Carnet process! The eCarnet working group of the International Chamber of Commerce/World Chambers Federation (ICC/WCF) provided an update on the electronic Carnet (eCarnet) developments to the WCO’s eATA Carnet Working Group.

The group met at WCO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium in June. The ICC/WCF advised it is moving, on schedule, into phase three of creating a digitized ATA Carnet system. There will be a pilot project launched in 2018 to test the system and processes for an eCarnet.

ICC/WCF showcased its recently developed Mercury system, a centralized database system of key ATA Carnet data. A digitized ATA Carnet will facilitate transactions, increase data security, reduce exceptions and improve administration. Customs, Carnet holders, service providers and national guaranteeing associations, such as USCIB, will be more productive with a modernized export/import process for items moving under an ATA Carnet. More than 15 nations and the European Union expressed their support and welcomed this initiative. Some countries displayed an eagerness to join the pilot project.

Andrew Shiles, USCIB’s new senior vice president of ATA Carnets and Trade Services, attended the WCO meeting and emphasized the large scale of business opportunities that ATA Carnets can provide for both small and large American enterprises. “It is exciting to be involved in such a dynamic time in the ATA Carnet industry,” said Shiles, adding that “We are truly making history by moving the ATA Carnet processes into the 21st century. This means that billions of dollars worth of goods will move through efficient eATA Carnet processes resulting in jobs being created.”

The ATA Carnets are used by thousands of exporters around the world to get goods through customs quickly and easily. While the ATA Carnet is currently in force in 77 countries, Shiles is striving to see an expansion of even more countries.

ATA Carnets are internationally recognized customs documents that permit temporary duty-free, tax-free entry of qualified goods for up to one year. They are used widely to facilitate entry of goods for trade shows, product samples and professional equipment. “Astute business people utilize the unique tool of an ATA Carnet to promote their goods internationally where they can generate incremental sales, reduce handling costs and protect a company’s cash flow when it comes to international transportation,” noted Shiles. “In fact, a company dealing with international sales may be missing out on a great opportunity if they are not using carnets,” he warned.

USCIB manages and guarantees the ATA Carnet system in the United States, with responsibility for issuing ATA Carnets falling to two outside service providers, Roanoke Trade and the Corporation for International Business. ATA Carnets are accepted in 77 countries and territories, while the global ATA systems are overseen by the WCO and the ICC. USCIB serves as ICC’s U.S. national guaranteeing association. For more information on ATA Carnets and the benefits they can provide for your business, please visit USCIB’s website.

USCIB Mourns Passing of Long-Time Stalwart Joe Alhadeff

USCIB is mourning the death of a long-time USCIB supporter, colleague and mentor Joseph Alhadeff. A USCIB Board member and Vice Chair of the ICT Policy Committee, Alhadeff passed away on May 27, following a long and very brave battle with a serious illness.

In the ICT and digital economy sphere, Alhadeff was a superb ambassador for Oracle as Vice President, Global Public Policy and Chief Privacy Strategist, as he extended himself beyond his daily responsibilities there to also serve as USCIB’s ICT Policy Committee Vice Chair for more than 15 years, while also chairing the ICC Digital Economy Commission (since 2013, after serving as Vice Chair since 2002), and BIAC’s Committee on Digital Economy Policy (since 2009, having served as a Vice Chair).

In all of these capacities, he provided intellectual guidance, policy leadership and rigorous precision on all aspects of digital economy policy, with a special focus on privacy and security. Alhadeff helped to build consensus on challenging issues about which USCIB members had divergent views—applying his innate grace, wisdom, competence and ever-present humor. The breadth of his knowledge and his skill in applying it to help shape policies that benefitted a broad cross-sector of ICT Policy Committee members is an ongoing inspiration.

“Joe’s passing is all the more remorseful to USCIB because he has for so long been part of our ‘family,’” said USCIB’s President and CEO Peter M. Robinson. Alhadeff began his career at USCIB in 1995 as director of e-commerce and legal counsel, at a time when USCIB was evaluating and then developing a practice to provide business leadership on issues related to use of the Internet. “With USCIB serving as his launchpad, we watched Joe steadily grow as such a highly respected and sought-after professional all over the world. Words can be inadequate at times like this to express our profound sadness about the passing of a dear friend and strong contributor to the global business community,” noted Robinson.
AJAY BANGA is president and chief executive officer of MasterCard, as well as a member of the board of directors. Before joining MasterCard in 2009, Mr. Banga served as chief executive officer of Citigroup’s Asia Pacific Region where he was responsible for all the company’s business lines in the region and spearheaded Citi’s strategy in the microfinance sector around the world. Prior to Citigroup, Mr. Banga spent 13 years with Nestle, India, where he held a variety of assignments and spent two years at Pepsico, where he was instrumental in launching Pepsico’s international fast food franchises in India as the economy liberalized. At MasterCard, Mr. Banga has made financial “inclusiveness” a key pillar of its long-term growth strategy and has made a very public commitment to all 17 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
Melike Yetken, a senior advisor for corporate responsibility with the U.S. Department of State, provided an update for approximately 40 USCIB members in May on the U.S. National Action Plan on Responsible Business Conduct (NAP). Yetken’s update was part of USCIB’s bi-annual Corporate Responsibility and Labor Affairs Committee, which took place over two days in Washington, DC. In her update, Yetken discussed the goals of the NAP – to emphasize positive contributions and to mitigate negative aspects and highlight that the U.S. is the only government that has written a NAP on responsible business conduct.

“This first U.S. NAP lays a great foundation,” said USCIB Vice President Gabriella Herzog. “This is particularly so since it brings together all of the initiatives in which the U.S. government has been engaged for years – leading global efforts on government transparency, anti-corruption, forced labor, child labor and human trafficking.” Herzog added, “When done well, NAPs also support businesses in implementing their responsibility to respect human rights in their operations and those of their business partners.”

USCIB co-hosted the first public consultation on the NAP two years ago and has since advocated alongside its global partners and other major business organizations for the U.S. and other governments to develop these strategic planning tools to implement the State Duty to Protect under Pillar 1 of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Committee Chair Laura Rubbo of Disney presided over these meetings. The meeting spanned various pressing topics such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) program on decent work in global supply chains, the Customs Tariff Act of 1930 and human rights and mega-sporting events. USCIB members also heard from former USCIB staffer Adam Greene in his capacity as senior advisor for the Bureau for Employers’ Activities at the ILO who gave an exclusive update on the ILO Program on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains.

USCIB Welcomes New Staff

Former FedEx executive and cargo industry veteran Andrew Shiles has joined USCIB to lead the association’s dynamic portfolio of trade services, including the “merchandise passports” used by thousands of exporters around the world to get goods through customs quickly and easily. As Senior Vice President of ATA Carnet and Trade Services, Shiles will work to expand U.S. trade interests through promotion of the ATA Carnet program. ATA Carnets are internationally recognized customs documents that permit temporary duty-free, tax-free entry of qualified goods for up to one year. They are used widely to facilitate entry of goods for trade shows, product samples and professional equipment.

USCIB manages and guarantees the ATA Carnet system in the United States, with responsibility for issuing ATA Carnets falling to two outside service providers, Roanoke Trade and the Corporation for International Business. ATA Carnets are accepted in 84 countries and territories, while the global ATA systems is overseen by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). USCIB serves as ICC’s American national committee.

Shiles comes to USCIB following more than 30 years at FedEx Express, the world’s largest air express cargo company, most recently as global regulatory compliance manager, where he served on USCIB’s Customs and Trade Facilitation Committee. His leadership experience in global supply-chain management includes participation in U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Simplified Entry Working Group, which redesigned and implemented the current entry-clearance process into the United States.

In April, USCIB welcomed Greg Tondi, USCIB’s Manager of Accounting and Finance. Prior to joining USCIB, Tondi was Controller at the College of St. Elizabeth in Morristown, NJ for the past couple of years. Before assuming his Controller position at the College of St. Elizabeth, Tondi was an Associate Manager of Accounting and Financial Analyst for Prudential Financial. He also spent several years as a high school teacher. Tondi enjoys teaching and continues as an Adjunct Professor at New Jersey City University where he received his Masters in Accounting. Tondi received his Bachelor of Science in Finance from Rutgers University.

Tondi is a Certified Public Accountant in the state of New Jersey.
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<th>Month</th>
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<td>31 – Sep 1</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<td>12 – 13</td>
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<td>OECD Global Forum on Climate Change</td>
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<td>12 – 25</td>
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<td>72nd Regular Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 72), Human Rights and Remedy in Business Relationships with Limited Leverage, Hosted by USCIB, Barrick Gold, and Article One Advisors</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>Miami</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>USCIB Annual Leadership Dinner honoring MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga</td>
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