

Newsletter

GLAWCAL

Issue 21, 2014

Focus on:

Digital Rights , Internet Freedom and Digital Economy

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Focus on

Digital Rights

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his new issue of gLAWcal newsletter will update you on the latest challenges for digital rights around the globe.

Our journey will start analyzing the outcomes of two important fora organized by United Nations: the Internet Governance Forum and the Child Online Protection Initiative. These two events promoted a worldwide discussion about the best practices and approaches to address some of the major challenges of our digital lives: freedom of speech, security, privacy and surveillance.

We will then move forward to observe how these UN events are echoed by other regional and local initiatives: APEC is working on the same grounds to expand connectivity among its members; Italy is promoting an Internet Bill of Rights; and in Arabic countries netizens are more and more worried by the possible negative consequences of the recent EU's Right to Be Forgotten.

Finally, we will glance at some projects driven by governments and the private sector aimed at boosting digital revolution in remote areas of the world.

Because of the rush of human knowledge,
because of the digital revolution, I have a voice,
and I do not need to scream.

Roger Ebert

Digital Rights

SHOWER OF CRITICS AND NEW CHALLENGES MARKED THE UN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

Last edition of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted in Istanbul has been the target of harsh critics and it ended with demanding challenges to be faced.

For the first time the United Nations conference has been followed by an alternative convention, the Internet Ungovernance Forum, aimed at casting light on more vital problems not taken into enough consideration in the official UN initiative.

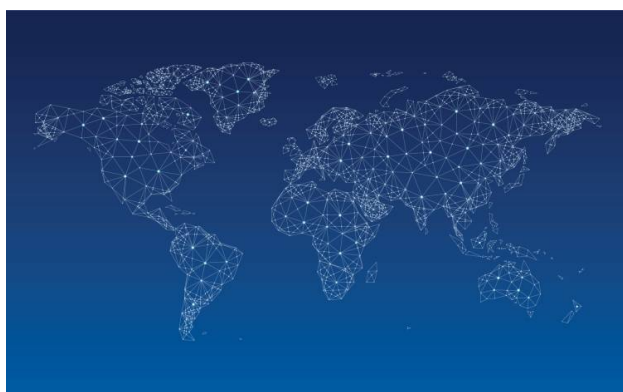
Ungovernance organisers wanted to get the right attention on topics neglected at IGF: censorship and freedom of speech; surveillance and privacy; excessive commercialization and super-monopolies as well as protective, prohibitionist and conservative governance approaches and the list goes on. Engaged by these issues, Edward Snowden and Julian Assange participated with impactful statements: highlighting the Turkish situation they advocate how the dangers of censorship outbalance the supposed benefits that governments believe to achieve with these measures.



Despite the harshest critics coming from this parallel event, many participants at the IGF decided to raise their voice to stimulate an inner change: the European Union commissioner Neelie Kroes, supported by United Kingdom Foreign Minister Ed Vaizey, made a call to action; while Macedonian Minister for Information Society and Administration Ivo Ivanovski stressed the absence of fundamental ministers such as those related to education, science and culture.

It's important to consider that the mandate of the IGF organization is close to the end and it's time to take stock of this initiative born under conditions totally different compared to the current situation. On the one hand the trend is directing towards new approaches to the issues, like the NetMundial initiative; on the other hand IGF supporters emphasize the tangible outcomes achieved during this edition, such as the best practice papers concerning multi-stakeholders mechanisms, spam, computer emergency response and online child protection.

In conclusion, while the ungovernance activists are satisfied with the impact of their conference, many think that the same initiative is necessary at the NetMundial as well.



Last edition of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted in Istanbul has been the target of harsh critics and it ended with demanding challenges to be faced.



Digital Rights

UNITED NATIONS GIVE GUIDANCE TO IMPROVE CHILDREN ONLINE PROTECTION

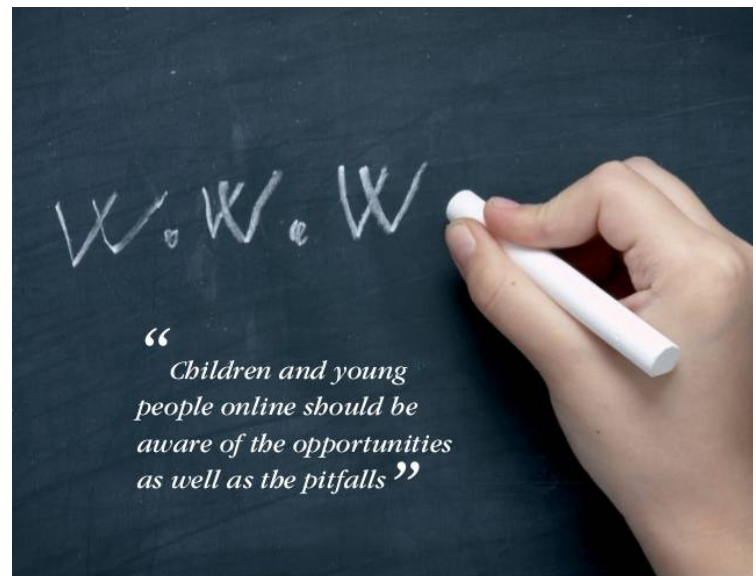
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N agencies cooperated with the Child Online Protection Initiative in order to develop new guidelines enhancing children online safety. According to Hamadoun I. Touré - Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU) - on the one hand online communication have revolutionized the world offering terrific opportunities, while on the other hand they made room for risks once unknown.

The document published, entitled "Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection", illustrates how information and communication technologies (ICT) can play a fundamental role in children online protection and how to empower responsible digital rights. Furthermore, it specifically targets internet tech companies - some of which, like Facebook, have also contributed to draft this common framework - to play their part.



These Guidelines aim to stimulate an widespread response to these new forms of children threat - engaging stakeholders, public and private sector, civil society, parents and educators - and it intends to expand the reach of the digital revolution to children that could not join it.



*Guidelines for children on child online
protection*



Digital Rights

UN ESCAP SHOWS NEXT STEPS TO BRIDGE DIGITAL DIVIDE



The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has organized an expert consultation dedicated to bridging digital divide across Asia and the Pacific. In fact, despite broadband internet incredibly impacting the poorest areas of this region, enlightening local people as to brand new opportunities of economic growth and literacy, more than 96% of people are reported not to be connected with high-speed, reliable and affordable internet connection.

UN ESCAP is leading an initiative, also known as the Asia Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS), with the objective of beefing-up internet regional infrastructure in order to improve access to the net for better prices. Indeed, as far as broadband connectivity is concerned, rural areas suffer of undeniable discrepancies comparing to urban markets, where telecom carriers ordinarily focus their business.



UNESCAP logo

To support countries in their struggle to develop a consistent and cohesive network, UN ESCAP is collaborating with Bhutan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Philippines, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Bank Group; these partnerships encompass sub-regional policy analysis and regional internet mapping aiming at fostering AP-IS initiative.

Participants to UN-led consultation concluded that AP-IS success depends on further investments and policy reforms. Furthermore, the outcome of the consultation backed the call for an amendment to the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway agreements as to realize ICT infrastructure along transport networks; following this path it will be possible to economize on construction time and costs, resulting in a win-win situation for governments and the private sector.

Superhighway map



Digital Rights

APEC PAVES THE WAY FOR GREATER REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

During the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, members of the forum outlined the strategy to realise regional connectivity by 2025. At a press conference Chinese President Xi Jinping asserted there was unanimity in investing at full scale to enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity.

Particular focus will initially be given to raise more funds to build a reliable infrastructure in all of its aspects including: energy, transportation, logistic and access to ICT. In addition to this, there is the idea to cure the financial bottleneck by encouraging partnerships between public and private sector.

To strengthen cooperation, the community will launch new initiatives so as to foster cross-border business travels, tourism and educational exchanges.



China Silk Road

Countries' economies in this area will benefit of an APEC Multi-Year Project with the purpose of doing business in a cheaper, faster and easier way.

The implementation of the blueprint will be actively monitored by APEC economies' ministers and officials that have scheduled yearly and mid-term reviews.

APEC meeting was also the occasion for President Xi Jinping to publicly announce 40 billion US dollars contribution to set up a Silk Road Fund and kick off financial assistance to China's neighbouring countries.



APEC Beijing



Digital Rights

PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERNET BILL OF RIGHTS



Italian Bill of Rights

Italy is promoting a draft for internet governance which aims to be the first step towards a European internet bill of rights. The government has created an ad hoc committee convening the major experts in the field; and the esteemed jurist Stefano Rodotà is leading the efforts in order to submit and comment the first proposals by the end of September.

In October a complete draft is meant to be presented by the ambitious committee at the European inter-parliamentary meeting on fundamental rights and to be submitted on the online platform Civi.ci in order to receive Italian citizens suggestions.



The work that the committee will face is broad, complex and includes many hot topics such as: net neutrality; the inclusion of internet access among universal rights; freedom of information; finding a satisfying balance among transparency, the rule of law and privacy; and digital literacy.

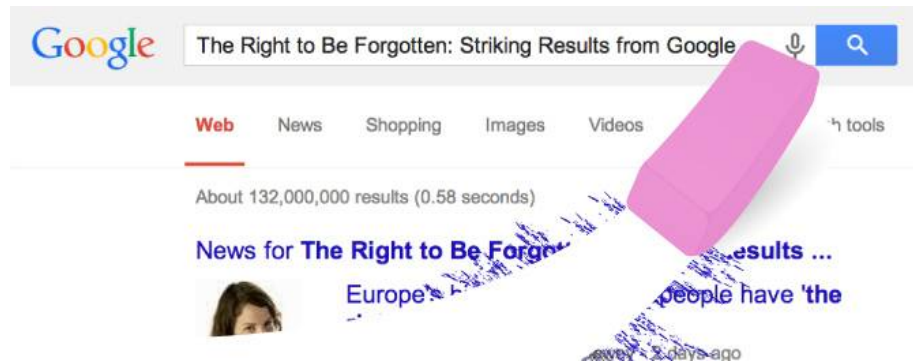
Around the world, many countries are supporting these internet governance initiatives: there are lively debates of whether or not to regulate the internet because it questions legal definitions of user's freedoms and obligations; Rodotà reminds the opposing party that the online world is full of binding "terms of services" that are already ruling our lives, therefore, the right question at the moment is who runs the internet.

As far as the Italian project is concerned, many are worried that few months will not be enough to draft a document that goes beyond a mere and generic declaration of principles. To avoid this situation, according to Juan Carlos de Martin - committee member and co-director of the Nexa Center for Internet & Society at the Politecnico of Turin - it would be useful to start realizing a concrete regulatory framework on impactful issues such as e-surveillance and data retention.



Digital Rights

INTERNET FREEDOMS THREATENED BY THE RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN



Activists fear the EU ruling on the Right to be Forgotten could have negative consequences especially in the Arabic region, where repressive regimes could use it as a pretext to expand censorship measures. Despite the EU court specified the Right to be Forgotten can find application only through a case-by-case assessment, the quantity of removal requests approved by Google - de facto resulting in blocking legitimate journalistic works - is so high and impactful that it is reasonable to believe this ruling could expand its consequences beyond European borders.

Google's CEO Larry Page himself has warned of the dangerous doors that this ruling could open to certain foreign governments more keen on strengthening internet filtering practices; and his words have already been echoed by Arabic advocates, such as Dhouha Ben Youssef, who remarks how investigative journalism, emerging in this area, will potentially come to a halt.



The UAE already passed a federal decree in 2012 that officially aim at fighting cybercrimes, but, on the other hand, it allows a pervasive control and suppression of authentic online content allegedly violating privacy rights.

According to Arabic government officials their laws and practices are as democratic as those of Europe, this is why western democratic regulators should be very cautious when they legislate: they have to be aware they are not only impacting their citizens' future, but they are also inspiring foreign countries. An example of this phenomenon is the establishment of the Tunisian Technical Telecommunication Agency; Former Tunisian ICTs minister Mongi Marzouk has openly commented that the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime was what stimulated his executive to do "better" in restraining internet freedoms.



Tunisian Technical Telecommunication Agency



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YOUTUBE CONTINUES TO BE BANNED IN PAKISTAN

In 2012 YouTube has been banned in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan because of a controversial anti-Islamic video entitled “Innocence of Muslims”. While the first two countries accepted to lift the ban provided the application of interstitials, Pakistan refused the offer and the video-platform continues to be banned.

After one year of censorship, the NGO Bytes for All decided to take legal action against the ban, questioning the reason why the ban is involving YouTube as a whole, since the executive order exclusively targets that specific video. The government itself has repeatedly declared that the ban will be removed as soon as the Supreme Court orders it, but many citizens are unsatisfied with these statements and they accuse the executive power of being inactive and disinterested in resolving the problem.

Activists have promoted a call to action by writing to the Prime Minister and lobbying both the IT committees in the National Assembly and the Senate in order for them to face the issue; but the situation is unlikely to change any time soon



In 2012, YouTube has been banned in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The controversial anti-Islamic video entitled “Innocence of Muslims”.





Digital Rights

MYANMAR'S INTERNET REVOLUTION



Burmese head of state Than Shwe

In order to view paid content, Myanmar market is exploring mobile payment forms, where the transition is charged on the Mobile SIM credit. This mechanism has the potential to promote economic growth in the internet sector as well as in others; for instance it could extend at allowing access to loan services in a country composed mainly by unbanked, rural population.

Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, has a ton of internet cafes.

After suffering military regime's restraints, foreign telecoms are finally able to offer cheap mobile tariffs that are causing a real digital revolution. The opening of this market has encouraged local entrepreneurs and attracted popular brands such as Google, Facebook, Instagram and Viber.

In 2011, when democratic transition started, only 1% of the population was estimated to have internet access; nowadays the affordable prices that are now spreading around have allowed to reach one quarter of Myanmar's population and the Myanmar Computer Federation has estimated that by 2017 about half of the population will be connected.





Digital Rights

THAILAND'S STRATEGY TO DIGITAL ECONOMY

Thai government is determined to change the country's mind-set in order to switch low-end manufacturing economy to digital economy.



Taking Thailand into web economy is not a new government mission, but to the present day it has been merely words; to effectively achieve the goals set into the digital agenda Thai executive aims at realizing a unity of command that will be able to guide each ministry and government agency through its duties and responsibilities under the same umbrella.

Doing this, it will possibly intervene and harmonize players' action.

Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam has explained that a new policy body will be established to govern digital economy, the parliament will work to amend laws so as to increase ICT ministry's competences, fund digital infrastructure investments and launch a national broadband network to give everyone total access to internet at a lower cost.

The whole project will probably not be completed within a year, but the government intends to shake the country's situation and lay a solid foundation to support throughout the reform.

The toughest task will consist in changing the mind-set of citizens, business operators and government officials; the executive is indeed conscious that switching to a digital economy is crucial, but if they do not do it right, all of their efforts will be futile. Due to this, digital literacy programs will be a starting point.

Thai government is determined to change the country's mind-set in order to switch low-end manufacturing economy to a digital economy; concentrating all of its energy in promoting innovative and high technology has proven not to be enough.

Many citizens consider governmental digital agenda to be just propaganda than an honest and a feasible plan, but ICT minister Pornchai Rujiprapa, aware of the enormous efforts envisioned, prefers to emphasize how this switch will allow Thailand to boost its economy, provide healthy competitiveness, create job opportunities and, more importantly, it will bridge gaps that are currently dividing Thais, spreading social, education and health benefits.



Digital Rights

GOOGLE PROJECT LOON WILL BRING INTERNET ACCESS TO REMOTE AREAS OF THE GLOBE



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oogle X Lab has been working on an ambitious project that will bring internet access to billions of people living in rural and remote areas of the globe, therefore, providing a greater access to knowledge. After over a year of testing, the next step of Project Loon is the creation of semi-permanent ring of balloons in the Southern part of the world; this ring will provide fast internet connection sending its signal to ground stations and mobile phones.

The pilot test has been conducted in New Zealand, where thirty high-altitude balloons were launched creating a network able to support 50 users simultaneously connecting.



Google balloons have been studied to fly twice as high than airplane routes, they float in the stratosphere and take advantage of the layers of wind to better arrange a large communication network.

The crucial technical problem Project Loon faces is maximizing the number of connections a single balloon can handle. For the time being, it has been estimated that a single balloon can support up to a hundred of simultaneous connections; a number that considerably drops in case of downloads and video-calls.

Google project loon



Digital Rights

FACEBOOK TO HELP INDONESIA EXPAND ACCESS

Indonesian president's success in giving internet access to his country excited Facebook founder and encouraged him to take part of this project. Mark Zuckerberg landed in Jakarta to hold a speech at one of the developer summit - scheduled in his internet.org initiative - to render assistance in providing easier and cheaper internet access and to promote useful free services regarding health, education and basic financial services.



During his staying, he had a long chat with Indonesian president Joko Widodo where the two discussed in-depth about social media campaigning directed to unleash the archipelago economic potential and illustrate benefits and opportunities of the digital revolution.

In Indonesia, internet penetration only amounts at 20% of the population, but if we consider mobile data plans, this percentage grows up to 85%. This is the reason why substantial intervention will be focused on developing mobile friendly websites and apps, besides pushing phone carriers to offer cheaper data plans. As far as technical issues are concerned, the major problem remains how to technically connect a complex of more than 17000 islands: building a



Both parties know that it will be challenging, but both the country and Facebook have much to gain from this partnership. To show his engagement Zuckerberg is also collaborating with the Swedish company Ericsson, providing support for app development and testing, recreating Indonesian network conditions in a specifically dedicated lab.

Indonesian President-elect Joko Widodo with Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg



Digital Rights

DIGITAL ACTIVISM TO PROMOTE TAIWAN'S GOVERNMENT ENHANCEMENT TO INTERNET

Online community g0v pushes Taiwanese government to fully embrace transparency and accessibility. Last March, during the protests against a trade deal with China - dubbed the Sunflower Movement - g0v community helped organize demonstrations, bringing food to the occupiers, serving tea to police officers and keeping the public up to date.

g0v's community aims to inspire a real social change by bridging the existing gap between offline and online activism; one of the core principles is to make government mechanisms more understandable to ordinary people and thus invite citizens to participate in its



A collaborative ethos pervades the whole organization which proves its belief by using open source platforms in order to promote stakeholders engagement. g0v's commitments have been demonstrated in various occasions, one of the most impressive is undoubtedly the 24-hour digitization of political donation records: public access to campaign donation documents was exclusively permitted for the paper version, in-person and at a government office; this action allowed to implement Taiwan's Campaign Donation Act of 2004 and to amend transparency laws.

The movement doesn't limit its actions to single episodes; it regularly hosts hackathons to physically gather supporters to focus on current problems and brainstorm solutions. In addition, it has recently launched its first international conference to promote discussion on hot topics such as open data, civic technologies and participatory government.

The uniqueness of g0v's community lies in its bottom-up and horizontal structure that allows making citizens' voices heard, and emphasizes the importance of each contributor. By using real-time collaborative platforms such as Hackpad, GitHub, Google Drive, and EtherCalc, as well as relying on the valuable help of the Sunlight Foundation, Microsoft Azure, and other academic, private, and public sponsors, g0v keeps on evolving fast and growing both locally and internationally to pursue its honourable objectives.



g0v's community aims at inspiring a real social change

gLAWcal activities

- As part of the Research Project on “**Liberalism In Between Europe And China**” - **LIBEAC -Assessing the Socio-Cultural and Politico-Legal Dimensions of the Differences in Terms of Interpretation and Enforcement of Economic, Social and Environmental Rights in Europe and China**”, 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, the following events have been organized:
- Benoit Misonne, Team Leader, Intellectual Property: A Key to Sustainable Competitiveness (IP Key - An EU project implemented and co-financed by OHIM in partnership with the EPO), “**Protection of Copyrights in the Digital Era**” held at Peking University, School of Government, Center for European Studies on 29th July 2014. Introduction and comments from Prof. Paolo Davide Farah (University Institute of European Studies, IUSE, Turin, Italy). The event is organized by gLAWcal – Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development (United Kingdom) in collaboration with the following beneficiaries and partner institutions of the European Union Research Executive Agency IRSES Project “Liberalism in Between Europe And China” (LIBEAC) coordinated by Aix-Marseille University (CEPERC): University Institute of European Studies (IUSE) in Turin, Italy and the University of Piemonte Orientale, Novara, Italy, Peking University, School of Government, Center for European Studies (China). Work-package 2 & 4.

Leaflet: <http://iuse.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-07-25-Marchetta-chamber-of-commerce.pdf>

Extract of the Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwD6hv92iYc>

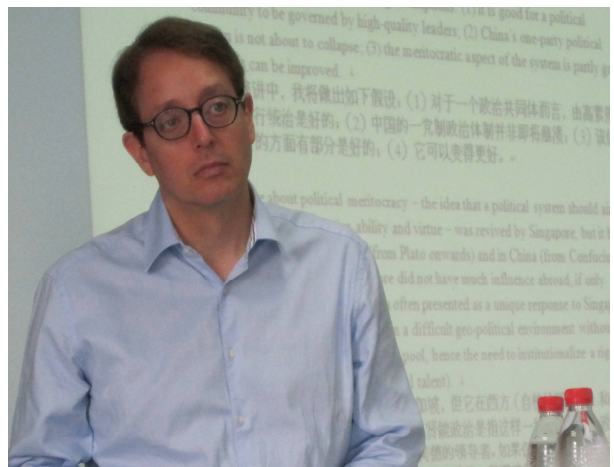


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- Key Note Speech of Professor Daniel Bell (Professor at Department of Philosophy and Director of the Center for International and Comparative Political Theory at Tsinghua University) on “**Political Meritocracy: China and the Limits of Democracy**” divided in three sessions: Part I: “*On the Selection of Good Leaders in a Political Meritocracy*”, Part II: “*What's Wrong with Political Meritocracy*”, Part III: “*Models of Democratic Meritocracy*” held at Peking University, School of Government, Center for European Studies on 21st July 2014. Introduction and comments from Prof. Paolo Farah (University Institute of European Studies, IUSE, Turin, Italy). The event is organized by gLAWcal – Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development (United Kingdom) in collaboration with the following beneficiaries and partner institutions of the European Union Research Executive Agency IRSES Project “Liberalism in Between Europe And China” (LIBEAC) coordinated by Aix-Marseille University (CEPERC): University Institute of European Studies (IUSE) in Turin, Italy and the University of Piemonte Orientale, Novara, Italy Peking University, School of Government, Center for European Studies (China), Tsinghua University, Department of Philosophy (China). Work-package 2 and 4.

Leaflet: <http://iuse.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Daniel-Bell-leaflet-21-july-2014-FINAL.pdf>

Extract of the Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyzjbaNGnJE>



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GLAWCAL

Global Law Initiatives for sustainable Development

WHO are We

gLAWcal is an independent non-profit research organization (think tank) that aims at providing a new focus on issues related to economic law, globalization and development, namely the relationship between international economy and trade, with special attention to a number of non-trade-related values and concerns.

Through research and policy analysis, gLAWcal sheds a new light on issues such as good governance, human rights, right to water, rights to food, social, economic and cultural rights, labour rights, access to knowledge, public health, social welfare, consumer interests and animal welfare, climate change, energy, environmental protection and sustainable development, product safety, food safety and security.

All these values are directly affected by the global expansion of world trade and should be upheld to balance the excesses of globalization.

Owner and Editor: gLAWcal - Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

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