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**International Centre for Trade Union Rights**  
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ICTUR was founded to  
defend and extend trade union rights and  
to raise awareness of these rights and their violations  
around the world

**Attn:**  
**President Donald J. Trump**  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**CC:** General Secretary, WFTU, Greece

**February 2018**

Dear President Trump,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to express confusion and concern at the reported denial of ESTA visa-waver travel authorisation to the General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, Georges Mavrikos.

According to information received at our office, the WFTU General Secretary has scheduled a visit to the USA for March 2018 to attend an event of the United Nations in New York, in respect of which institution he is accredited as a permanent representative of the WFTU. He is also scheduled to participate as the main speaker in the annual international trade union meeting of Trade Union Organizations members and friends of WFTU that will take place the same month in Los Angeles. We are advised that Mr. Mavrikos's application was correctly submitted, in accordance with all public criteria applied by the ESTA process.

The WFTU is an important UN- and ILO-accredited international organisation founded in 1945, organising tens of millions of members in affiliated unions throughout the world. As a matter of principle our organisation believes that the participation of international trade union representatives at UN events is of critical importance to the effective functioning of that organisation as a democratic space. We recall the UN's stated position on those ideals: 'Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere', (see, United Nations, *Democracy*, at: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/democracy/>).

Our organisation recalls the position of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association: 'Although it recognizes that the refusal to grant visas to foreigners is a matter which falls within the sovereignty of the State, the Committee has requested a government to ensure that the formalities

required of international trade unionists to enter the country are based on objective criteria free of anti-trade unionism' (*Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee of the Governing Body of the ILO*, Fifth Edition, 2006, para. 753). The CFA has further emphasized that: 'The authorities should verify each specific case as quickly as possible and should aim – on the basis of objective criteria – at ascertaining whether or not there exist facts which might have real repercussions on public order and security. It would be desirable, in situations of this kind, to seek an agreement through appropriate discussions in which the authorities, as well as the leaders and organizations concerned, may clarify their positions' (*Digest*, para. 759).

Our organisation questions whether there exists any credible public order or security issue at stake in this case, and we urge the US visa authorities to urgently re-assess this visa application.

ICTUR will report these incidents in the journal *International Union Rights*, which was established in 1993, and which enjoys a readership in more than 100 countries.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Blackburn', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Blackburn, Director