UN General Assembly grants Observer Status to International Chamber of Commerce in historic decision

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- United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution granting Observer Status to world’s largest business association
- New role for the International Chamber of Commerce first time business given official role in General Assembly in the 71-year history of the UN
- Landmark move will enhance business engagement on global governance issues—including implementation of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In an unprecedented move, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly has today granted Observer Status to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)—the world’s largest business organisation representing more than six million members in over 100 countries.

The decision—taken by 193 members of the UN General Assembly during its on-going 71st session in New York—is the first time that a business organisation has been admitted as an Observer at the UN General Assembly. The list of UN observers is highly restricted and features principally intergovernmental organisations.

The new role for ICC means that business will for the first time have direct voice in the UN system. The decision paves the way for ICC to contribute directly to the work of the General Assembly and reflects the vital role the private sector will play in implementing the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ICC Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said: “This is huge recognition of the role that business can play in contributing to a better and peaceful world. There is only one route to meeting the many challenges that face our society—from climate change to mass migration—and that is for governments and civil society to work hand-in-hand with the private sector.

“Granting Observer Status to ICC sends a powerful signal that the UN recognizes business as a vital partner. We stand ready to ensure that the private sector plays a full role in meeting the ambition of the 2030 agenda.”

The resolution to grant observer status to ICC was submitted by France—ICC’s host country—and was supported by 22 other Member States. ICC already works with a wide array of UN specialised agencies and organisations around the world providing business input and expertise on issues from commercial standards through to climate change. ICC was designated as the official business representative in the processes that lead to the
creation of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—a key factor in the General Assembly’s decision.

ICC Secretary General John Danilovich said: “It's a great honour for ICC to be granted Observer Status at the UN General Assembly. ICC has a long tradition of close cooperation with the United Nations and today’s decision reflects our sustained efforts to strengthen the relationship between the UN and the private sector.

“Given the complexity of today’s global challenges, it’s vital that business has a clear voice in UN decision making. We look forward to using this unique platform to deploy fully the resources, expertise and knowledge of world business in the work of the General Assembly.”

Following today's UN General Assembly resolution, ICC will take up its position as observer to the General Assembly on 1 January 2017.