

Augusto Beato Lauds Timely Move to Create International E-commerce Rules

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Portland SEO's Augusto Beato lauded the move of over 70 countries and regions to create a set of international e-commerce rules to govern the flow of data across borders, regardless of how China behaves in the talks. The countries include the U.S., the European Union, and Japan.

Ministers from 76 WTO members said in a joint statement that they will seek to achieve a high standard outcome that builds on existing WTO agreements and frameworks with the participation of as many WTO members as possible.

Agreed-upon rules will be implemented as early as 2020 by participating countries.

The global market for e-commerce is forecast to approach $1 trillion in 2020 as online sales continue to grow, yet the world lacks shared rules for these transactions. "Compliance with separate regulations for each country and region has become a significant burden for companies and a hindrance to expanding their operations," said Beato, who is the CEO of Portland SEO.

E-commerce companies seeking advice on how to boost online visibility and increase sales may tap the services of Portland SEO through this link.

Beato pointed out that US companies are currently lobbying for concessions in India whose e-commerce investment rules would soon ban companies from selling products via firms in which they have an equity interest and also bar them from making deals with sellers to sell exclusively on their platforms.

The policy has dealt a blow to Walmart, which just last year invested $16 billion in buying 77 percent of India's Flipkart, and Amazon, as it would force them to change their business structures in the country and raise their operational costs.

The WTO agreement would set ground rules that would safeguard the interests of companies that have substantially invested in another country.

The talks, set to start this summer, will focus on the international transfer of corporate and consumer data associated with e-commerce. The U.S. and Japan are pushing for free flows of information, saying companies should be allowed to bring data back home for analysis. They are also calling for governments to be banned from requesting corporate secrets.

These proposals were made with an eye toward China, which is strengthening its digital protectionism. Beijing currently bans foreign companies from transferring Chinese consumer data outside the country and forces them to disclose source codes for software. It also demands that these companies keep servers in China.

The European Union also differs from Japan and the U.S. with its emphasis on privacy protections, which culminated with the passage of its General Data Protection Regulation in May. The law essentially prevents transfers of personal data outside the bloc.

The EU had taken the lead on regulations for e-commerce and tech companies when it unveiled its digital single-market strategy in 2015.

Other topics to be discussed will include eliminating tariffs for content like movies and music, as well as promoting electronic signatures to improve the efficiency of customs work.

Although China is opposed to the free flow of data, "it is upbeat about simplifying customs procedures," said a source at the meeting. China is likely aiming to be a leader in the negotiations to create favorable rules for itself and participate in pragmatic international arrangements.
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For more information about Portland SEO, contact the company here:Portland SEOAugusto Beato(503) 278-5580info@portlandseo.net1435 NW Northrup STPortland, OR 97209

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