

Donald Abelson
Federal Communications Commission
Chief, International Bureau

Donald Abelson has been Chief of the International Bureau at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) since July 1999. In this capacity, he oversees the Bureau's coordination of the FCC's international activities and its role as the focal point for the FCC's regulation of international telecommunication services (including the licensing of international and domestic submarine cable and satellite networks). Mr. Abelson manages the Bureau's provision of technical advice to the Executive Branch regarding international telecommunications issues (regarding the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (including, the World Radiocommunications Conferences) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)) and on bilateral telecom issues (including issues in telecom trade negotiations). Mr. Abelson is also a member of the FCC's executive board that manages spectrum policy matters, with a particular interest in satellite and terrestrial services and networks.

Abelson came to the Commission with extensive experience in international communications issues. Before being named to his current position, Abelson served as Assistant U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) for Industry and Communications (1998/9). In this capacity, he led USTR's effort to facilitate global electronic commerce over the Internet. As USTR's Chief Negotiator for Communications and Information (1997/8), Abelson headed the U.S. delegation to the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on basic telecommunications services from 1994, through their successful conclusion in February 1997. These negotiations resulted in a precedent-setting agreement on basic telecommunications in which 70 countries made trade commitments covering 95% of global local, long-distance and international services delivered by wire, wireless and satellite technologies.

In 1993, as Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Services, Investment and Intellectual Property, Abelson was the senior negotiator for the United States on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which forms a part of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In previous assignments at USTR, Abelson lead the U.S. team that secured trade deals on telecommunications terminal equipment practices with Japan (1983-1985) and Europe (1985-1988). And, for a decade between 1977 and 1987, Abelson was the chief negotiator on standards-related trade issues.

Abelson has a Master's Degree in International Economics from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) (1975) and a Bachelor's Degree from Sarah Lawrence College (1972).

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