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Business Roundtable

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On behalf of the CEO members of Business Roundtable, we write to thank your team for meeting with us in May. We would like to continue this dialogue and provide additional feedback on the key issues we discussed at our meeting.

First, we write to convey that we acknowledge the challenges the Department of State faces in restoring consular operations abroad. Public health conditions continue to change and vary by country, and the agency must prioritize its employees' health and safety. The consular closures and visa restrictions that were in place for most of 2020 have resulted in significant backlogs of immigrant visa cases. We understand that consulates must process those cases and reunify families.

Going forward, improving nonimmigrant visa processing related to business travel will be critical to the economic recovery of the United States. Under regional travel restrictions, fully-vaccinated business leaders and key personnel have been banned from entering the United States despite the fact that they oversee large U.S. workforces and investments. We were pleased to see the May 27 announcement that travelers who will provide executive direction for critical infrastructure or significant economic activity in the United States are eligible for national interest exemptions. We encourage the Department of State to continue to review travel restrictions and provide clear guidance to the public and employers.

To address the significant backlogs and keep up with increasing demand in the months ahead, we encourage the agency to take the following actions to increase capacity at overseas posts:

- Waive visa interviews for low-risk work visa applicants;
- Facilitate third-country visa processing to utilize capacity wherever it may exist at the agency;
- Conduct video interviews to mitigate space constraints;
- Expand use of automatic revalidation of visa stamps; and
- Resume stateside visa processing.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss solutions and provide support to the Department of State. Thank you for your attention to these important matters. Business Roundtable looks forward to continuing our engagement with you and your team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Cook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tim" and last name "Cook" clearly distinguishable.

Tim Cook
CEO, Apple
Chair, Immigration Committee, Business Roundtable