

Closing speech

Good afternoon Excellencies, friends and colleagues.

I am happy to address you today on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce initiative **BASIS – Business Action to Support the Information Society**.

Following WSIS, ICC created this initiative to raise awareness of what business wants and needs to continue our contribution to the development of the Information Society.

BASIS comprises businesses and organizations from over 120 countries, from a broad range of sizes, sectors and geographies.

I would like to thank our Indian hosts and applaud the Indian government for proceeding with the IGF despite recent events in Mumbai.

This year's IGF has been an outstanding success.

For many of us, this is our third IGF. I was on the first panel at the IGF in Athens where we discussed "openness". I recall the tension and uncertainties that many of us felt then. The discussions were intense and at times accusatory. We have come a long way.

As we conclude our time here together I'd like to take a moment to reflect upon why it is that so many of us have travelled -- from near and far -- to meet in Hyderabad.

The IGF is unique. We come here as **leaders in our communities** who want to voice what is important to us. In the process, we get a deeper understanding of what is important to others.

The organizational format of plenary sessions, workshops and dynamic coalitions has been carefully planned. It allows candid exchanges among all stakeholders on an unqualified equal footing.

In his message to us at last year's IGF in Rio, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "This forum is modest in its means but not in its aspirations. It may have no power to make decisions but it can inform and inspire those that are in a position to make them."

The IGF is not a series of political statements and proceedings, rather each participant is an equally-empowered contributor. Just consider for a moment the diversity of voices that you have heard over the last four days

What are we accomplishing at the IGF?

Over three years, the IGF has increasingly proven its worth. Since we first came together discussions have matured, relationships have been formed and strengthened. We have seen an increased focus on issues and a significant reduction in rhetoric.

As we make our way home, **this week's discussions** will remain with us. We will keep in our minds **the experiences and best practices shared** as we take them home to our respective communities. We will continue to build upon the trust and relationships fostered here so that when we gather again next year in Egypt our discussions will be even more candid.

Concretely, we have been able to come together to elevate such issues as affordable access, the creation of a multilingual Internet and IDNs, free flow of information, the balance of security, privacy and openness, child protection, and critical Internet resources to name but a few.

Our exchanges are valuable in and of themselves. Colleagues new to the IGF have expressed surprise to me at the number of considerations identified in the discussions.

We build on this each year. We come to the IGF to share ideas and experiences and leave with insights and new perspectives to apply back home. These benefits may not be easy to measure but there **is** resonance.

On some of these issues the IGF gives us an opportunity to monitor progress - IDNs for example. The IGF improves our understanding of the role of IDNs and the importance of making them a reality. By focusing on IDNs, the IGF has also served to advance the dialogue in other forums and increased interest in its success.

The experiences in the next year from initial implementations will undoubtedly be a source of great interest at the IGF in Egypt.

Beyond the main session exchanges, **constructive dialogues and practical skills development sessions** are taking place in workshops.

At the **BASIS/Government of Finland workshop on digital convergence**, we discussed practical examples of how innovation and entrepreneurship are serving small businesses in emerging markets.

Some innovative technologies and business models may seem to introduce challenges. Nonetheless, innovation is key. Participants in the workshop used examples to illustrate how innovation could help extend the reach of the Internet and its benefits.

At the IGF we are building knowledge and forging the relationships necessary to move us closer to a more inclusive and people-centric information society.

What next?

To make the most of the IGF we must continue to take the knowledge gained, and build on the relationships formed to make an impact in our respective regional and local activities.

We have already seen progress in the last year with the introduction of national and regional multistakeholder, IGF-related events. Business believes these initiatives should spread. We hope to see more emerge in 2009 that will further enrich the global IGF discussions in Egypt.

As the IGF has matured, we have seen lines soften. Those with seemingly incompatible views have found common ground through greater understanding. This approach ensures movement on substantive issues and is progress. Regional IGFs are a way to build on this between now and Egypt.

Business sees no benefit to the stalemates of entrenched positions and word-smithing on very narrow issues that would occur if the IGF were focused on time-consuming negotiations of a text. That would greatly undermine the many benefits we have identified.

Over the next year, business will connect another 200 million or more people to the Internet. Even more will get mobile service for the first time.

All stakeholders must continue to work together to ensure that not only “the connected” but those “not connected” benefit from the Information Society.

This is the path to realizing an “**Internet for All**”.

Business looks forward to **sharing our experiences and lessons learned** with you in Egypt and to hearing about your efforts and issues as well.

My special thanks to Nitin Desai, Markus Kummer and his IGF Secretariat team, and the members of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group who have made the Hyderabad IGF a success.

Thank you.