COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

Twenty-second session
Geneva, 13 to 17 May 2019

Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2018 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

International Chamber of Commerce
Business Action to Support the Information Society (ICC BASIS)

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 22nd session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

ICC BASIS input to CSTD for the preparation of the UN Secretary-General's report assessing the progress made in 2018 in the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS

Part One: Executive summary

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), with its global business membership of over 6 million companies of all sizes and across all sectors spanning more than 100 countries, has been actively engaged on behalf of the private sector through all stages of the WSIS process from its inception and is a firm supporter of the WSIS action lines and overall vision.

ICC's Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) coordinated the involvement of global business at the WSIS events in 2003 and 2005. Business leaders expressed the need for continued global coordination of business interests in global processes established by the Summit, thus ICC responded to this call by launching its Business Action to support the Information Society (ICC BASIS) initiative. Since then, ICC BASIS has been actively engaged in all WSIS-related events and forums, present at all Internet Governance Forums (IGF), at Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) meetings, and the other annual and special WSIS follow-up events hosted by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) respectively and collectively.

ICC BASIS contributions serve as primary resources for business expertise for governments, international organizations and other stakeholders. The organization has demonstrated a consistently strong commitment to both voice the perspectives of businesses worldwide and to work cooperatively across all stakeholders to support and advocate for effective and impactful multistakeholder approaches to Internet governance issues.

We welcome this opportunity to share our reflections on the progress made in 2018 in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

Part two of this contribution looks at how business, as a critical actor in innovation, technology development and infrastructure deployment for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), has contributed to the furthering of the WSIS vision and how the multistakeholder approach was critical in achieving these results.

Part three aims to highlight the contributions of business to the advancement of the WSIS targets and the policy steps needed to allow business to continue this work.

Part Two: trends and experiences in implementation

In the past years substantial progress has been made on the WSIS vision. ICTs have had an impact on social and economic development since 2005 that cannot be overstated. ICT is now widely recognized as a critical enabler of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, equipping populations with tools to relieve poverty, access education, provide healthcare and reduce CO2 emissions, just to name a few. In addition, as both Internet access and use have increased, it has resulted in the growth of nearly every sector of every economy around the world, supported the development of new products, services, and business models. It has also enabled businesses of all sizes, especially individual entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises, to reach users all over the world with increasing ease.

WSIS has increased awareness of the potential benefits ICTs can bring to populations around the world. The underlying principles of the Geneva Declaration and Tunis Agenda have catalysed progress through the action lines and promoted efforts to address digital divides and harness ICTs for poverty reduction and economic development.

The private sector has been an important actor in deploying Internet related infrastructure and innovating and delivering a wide range of ICT applications and services. On these investments local and global digital ecosystems have flourished – developing demand and supply sides of national economies. Business initiatives and investment have contributed to:

- **The dramatic improvement in global connectivity and meaningful access to ICTs:** the private sector plays a pivotal role in deploying Internet-related infrastructure and delivering a wide range of ICT services. Advances pioneered by business in mobile broadband (4G and 5G) and next-generation satellite technologies continue to catalyse the delivery of digital services, going hand in hand with the growing Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence to support educational initiatives, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as all individuals, to become producers of locally relevant services and information worldwide.
- **Capacity and innovation improvements that in turn contribute to flourishing entrepreneurship with notable examples in developing and least developed countries:** business also contributes to encouraging access through capacity building and education initiatives, promoting innovation, public-private research and development partnerships, where businesses work with other stakeholders. Examples of the Internet catalysing capacity can be seen in initiatives that use connectivity to empower women, girls, and all youths with appropriate skills and education and health knowledge etc.[1] In addition, the Internet can be used to provide mobile money services that lower barriers of access to financial services in developing or rural areas. The proliferation of applications, technologies for smart cities, energy, water etc., data analytics and research collaboration should also be noted as the Internet speeds up capacity by advancing and enriching global and shared research and development output.
- **Fostering an inclusive information society, supporting every person to become not only ICT-capable, but to use ICT tools to improve their social, economic and personal connections and become active citizens:** business is investing in extensive community-oriented training to enhance the use of enabling technology, especially among marginalized groups. The Internet helps bring increased attention to initiatives that enable groups that would otherwise face barriers to development including education due to a disability, their gender, race, class, age etc.

Private sector initiatives are also reinforcing the importance of partnerships and inclusive approaches as many programmes encourage an entire lifetime attitude to training and awareness-raising.[2] Business often collaborates with local communities, governments, as well as global organizations and has considerable knowledge and expertise in addressing the digital divides.[3]

Part Three: A brief description of:

(a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes.

Sustainable private sector investment will continue to be an important factor in pursuing further economic and social development. Aligning public policies that promote rather than deter investment in infrastructure, and technologies to enable new applications and services is paramount. This will not only benefit countries and citizens to help meet the entire range of sustainable development goals, but also free up valuable scarce government resources, especially in developing countries. Large scale private sector investments in building out the

[1] http://www.amakomaya.com/en
[2] https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/DigitalLiteracy/casestudies.aspx
[3] https://www.telefonica.com/en/web/public-policy/blog/article/-/blogs/ict-and-social-innovation-the-m-inclusion-project

broadband infrastructure and delivering benefits of ICTs has already allowed governments, and will increasingly facilitate, to deploy resources in important, critical areas such as delivering primary health-care services and basic education.

Policies designed to further the WSIS targets and address the barriers to access should consider a multi-layered framework and holistic approach that takes into account both economic, technical, socio-cultural, and governance factors. Such policies should:

- **Understand and leverage the potential of ICTs to address digital divides:** To this end, governments need to be well-informed about how the ICT ecosystem works in practice, the barriers to access and how challenges can be overcome. This is especially relevant for disruptive and emerging technologies. Policies on infrastructure, applications, services and user-engagement all have an important impact on the ICT ecosystem. Greater understanding of these issues can equip policymakers with a framework to identify appropriate policy approaches.

  For example: The ICC BASIS-led workshop during IGF 2018 (Accessibility Improved: building inclusive societies with AI) contributed to the wider understanding of how AI can be put to use to create solutions for new opportunities and assist people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Through this discussion challenges were also explored, with participants reflecting on technical, but also economic, social, ethical, cultural and governance considerations. This helped identify policy elements necessary to create an enabling environment for innovation and investment in new technologies, such as considerations of: access, use, innovation, jobs, society, trust and market openness.

- **Aim to create an enabling environment for investment and innovation:** The legal, policy and regulatory environments and approaches at national levels should promote investment in ICTs and infrastructure, and foster entrepreneurship and innovation. Such environments are marked by transparency, accountability and regulatory certainty. Enabling environments, created through flexible and light touch public policies that enable emerging and innovative technologies and business models, are crucial to advance the WSIS targets and fully benefit from the social and economic advantages of the Internet.

  For example: In 2017 ICC's Commission on the Digital Economy developed a policy paper on ICT, policy and sustainable economic development. The paper was updated in 2018 with relevant examples and case studies pertaining to the SDGs under review this year by ECOSOC.

- **Promote dialogue and partnerships between all stakeholders:** Multistakeholder cooperation and engagement to bridge digital divides is vital. With all relevant stakeholders consulted, governments will be better equipped to ensure an enabling policy environment for sustainable investment in ICTs.

  For example: The ICC BASIS-led workshop during the 2018 WSIS Forum (Connecting communities by building digital skills – a way towards the SDGs) found that while governments are able to take the lead and set goals for skills development programmes, the best results can be achieved when the private sector, civil society and the technical community are involved in implementation. Working together with all stakeholders, the most effective solutions can be created, tailored to particular need, and with the combined expertise from their respective angles.

(b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above.

Access to an open and inclusive Internet is the central issue of our time, and a fundamental tool enabling free speech and empowering people in the 21st century. In 2018 51.2% of the world's population was connected to the Internet, almost 60% of households had Internet connection

and nearly 96% of the world's population lives within reach of mobile cellular network[4]. Connecting the those who are not yet connected is the greatest opportunity for the continued development of the Internet.

The unconnected population is disproportionately female, elderly, less educated, lower income and rural. Despite impressive advances in global connectivity, more must be done to address the challenges that prevent them from benefitting from the Internet. They are the ones that have most to gain from the broad social and economic benefits the Internet can bring: greater economic opportunities, reducing poverty and hunger,[5] improved access to healthcare and education services,[6] and increased empowerment and opportunities for women.[7] Studies suggest that a 10% increase in broadband penetration in developing countries is correlated with a 1.35% increase in GDP.[8] Specific and adapted programs should be fostered to address these populations.

Challenges to connectivity can take various forms including: proximity of infrastructure for access, cost of access, lack of digital skills and ability to find content that is relevant and available in local languages. To address these, business supports the various activities currently being undertaken in forums that encourage multistakeholder collaboration to tackle issues and provide resources and policy options for all stakeholders to overcome challenges.

Policymakers can benefit from close cooperation with business and other stakeholders to ensure that the legal, policy and regulatory approaches implemented will prepare them to maximize the Internet broadband and data opportunities.

To achieve these goals, it is crucial that the future of the Internet be shaped through an open, inclusive and truly multistakeholder process. Multistakeholder collaboration is essential to maximizing the potential of ICT while addressing issues that are relevant locally and respecting local cultural and social norms.

About the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the world's largest business organization with a network of over 6 million members in more than 100 countries. We work to promote international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation through a unique mix of advocacy and standard setting activities—together with market-leading dispute resolution services. Our members include many of the world's largest companies, SMEs, business associations and local chambers of commerce.

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[4] ITU: https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/2018-PR40.aspx
[5] World Bank, World Development Report 2016
[6] World Bank, World Development Report 2016
[7] Melhem, Samia, Claudia Morrell, and Nidhi Tandon. 2009. "Information and Communication Technologies for Women's Socioeconomic Empowerment."
[8] Colin Scott (2012): Does broadband Internet access actually spur economic growth? Available at http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/~rcs/classes/ictd