

**UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
Opening Remarks on behalf of ICC BASIS**

**S. Ramadorai, BASIS Chair and Vice Chairman Tata Consultancy Services,
17 May 2010, Geneva**

Ladies and Gentlemen and distinguished guests,

As the Vice-Chairman of Tata Consultancy Services, and the Chair of BASIS or Business Action to Support the Information Society, an initiative of the International Chamber of Commerce, it is an honour for me to be here at this opening of the 13th session of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

ICC BASIS is committed to promoting an inclusive and people-centred information society. We therefore acknowledge the critical role of CSTD in monitoring and assessing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society including the Internet Governance Forum.

I address you today as both a technocrat and businessman. As you begin this week of discussions, I would like to share with you how business worldwide and from across sectors is helping attain WSIS goals.

In this highly connected knowledge world, it is no longer business as usual. Indeed, it is the unusual that today commands a premium. We live in an Age of ideas. Technology has become pervasive, by the time an idea is commercialized; it is time for the next new idea. Innovation has therefore become a survival tactic for businesses. Millions of dollars are being invested by business in R&D, often in partnership with academia. Competition amongst business ensures ideas get implemented into the market rapidly and very quickly. Therefore it would not be wrong to say that business drives innovation.

Countries such as Brazil, Russia, China and India are where the next level of global growth will take place. Growth rates of some are triple those of Western economies, which is perhaps why the UN has officially pronounced the expression “The Third World” as dead. There is a “New South” emerging, one that does not ask for aid but speaks from a position of strength.

It is here that the next billion internet users will come from. What are the interface device they will use? How will they use it and what activities they will conduct are the preoccupations of the global business community.



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Prasad is one of the 500 million people in India who have a “computer” in their pocket today. It is in the form of a cell phone. In comparison only 20 million own desktops. Prasad has never used anything so high tech before. Also he does not speak English and has never been to school. But he does however speak his native language. In this situation there is a need to look at a fundamentally different way to interact with computers. Perhaps through speech and gestures such as sixth sense technologies. Indian experts are therefore going back to the drawing board, examining afresh our operating systems, user interfaces and standards on one hand and look at inclusiveness, affordability and applicability to critical areas like education, health and agriculture.

Across the developing world, new models of Mobile banking, e-farming and telemedicine are emerging. If we seek to solve poverty, education, employment issues through digital and financial inclusion, we will need millions of low cost devices, handheld devices, bio monitoring solutions, micro payment solutions, GIS, project monitoring solutions, and smart meters. These products must be designed for a country’s specific needs.

In India there are instances of villagers selling their land to Government for development of factories etc, they inherit large sums of money but because they are not financially literate or have no banks nearby, they spend their money on buying cars and other short-lived pleasures rather than investing the capital and building financial security.

The point I make is that, technologies developed elsewhere, are not often optimal for the developing world. We are witnessing a new phenomenon of reverse innovation where developing countries are able to tailor products, at price points and value additions suited to their own markets. These products are tested in the toughest terrains and are hence adaptable for the rest of the world. For instance GE – China has invented a simple, inexpensive, portable ECG machine which it has found a market in US for accident victims. This is reverse innovation in action.

Having an innovative product, a business to back it and a market that needs it, is also not always sufficient for its success. You need policies to create an environment to encourage people to use a technology, market forces do the rest. Tax incentives, subsidies are tools at the disposal of government to urge citizens to adopt new technologies. The success of electric cars for instance depends upon waivers on parking fees and recharging points in public places.

Clearly governments, academia, NGO’s, business and policy makers – all need to work in conjunction for new ideas and technologies to be implemented and society to progress. One Forum that brings all these stakeholders together on a common platform is the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).



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The IGF is a one-of-a-kind platform that underscores the importance of the Internet as a vast resource with enormous potential to raise living standards around the globe. It encourages frank and open exchange among all stakeholders who might otherwise have no chance to engage.

The IGF is a driver of informed policymaking, helping reduce resistance and suspicions among stakeholders. This leads to better decision making. Business has long been a supporter of the unique IGF multistakeholder format and gives full support to the continuation of the forum to ensure continued Internet innovation.

Findings of a survey released last year by the Diplo Foundation, and supported by a BASIS members AT&T, back the importance of the IGF as a significant driver of informed policy at a local level. Results revealed that almost half of respondents found the knowledge gathered through the IGF to be practical enough for them to make a good start on policy development and implementation in their respective communities, while over 15% found it to be immediately applicable.

To recount to you all the ways in which business contributes to the attainment of WSIS goals on a practical level would be impossible during my short address to you. But thanks to the WSIS action lines Forum meetings, we have a real opportunity to raise awareness and share practical information about such activities and partnerships.

By exchanging real experience rather than policy issues, we believe that the WSIS action lines can value-add for participants, who come away from meetings with good knowledge and concrete guidance about what stakeholders are doing in regard to the action lines topics. Policy discussions are taking place in other processes so it is prudent to avoid duplication. At the same time it would signify sensitivity to the time and financial resources of all stakeholders.

Speaking on behalf of the business community, we want to continue engaging with all stakeholders to spread the benefits of the information society more widely across the world.

The future of the Internet and related technologies are a common concern to all of us present here irrespective of which country we come from or which stakeholder group we represent. We also share a common commitment to better the lives of ordinary people irrespective of whether it is Prasad in India, Pendo in Africa or Peter in America. We share a common intent and a common goal -to fulfil the WSIS goals and commitments. For me personally and on behalf of BASIS I would like to reiterate the importance of IGF continuity in its multistakeholder format.

We owe it to those who do not have a voice in society.

Thank you.