

Guy Sebban's opening statement on behalf of ICC/BASIS to the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)

Strategy Council meeting, 27 February 2007, Santa Clara, CA

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to be here among such distinguished speakers and to participate with my counterparts from all stakeholder groups in advancing the important work of this alliance.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), represents member companies and associations from all sectors and of all sizes in 130 countries.

ICC was founded in 1919 with the primary mission of promoting cross-border trade and investment. Multilateral trade has long been a critical driver of economic growth, job creation, increased consumer choice and improvements to the quality of peoples' lives in the developing and the developed world.

Today we remain focused on this purpose; but we do so in a landscape that has been dramatically transformed by information and communication technologies.

Advocating for liberalization and removing obstacles to economic growth has never been more important, especially to allow developing nations to reap the benefits of the digital economy – benefits which include gaining access to the wealth of information and knowledge available. Empowerment will come with it.

ICC brings members together from around the world to develop policy positions and build consensus on a number of ICT issues through our Commission on E- Business and IT and Telecoms. This commission addresses timely concerns relating to data protection and privacy; Internet and telecoms infrastructure and services; and security and authentication. It also produces practical tools to help policymakers and business users develop frameworks and employ best practices to deal with these issues.

With our newest initiative Business Action to Support the Information Society, BASIS, we have an engaged and active coalition of members from different types of companies participating in global forums, including this alliance, the Internet Governance Forum and other post-WSIS activities.

The importance of ICTs to business goes well beyond e-commerce. ICTs are present in all aspects of business and trade. They are critical elements for companies out of the ICT sector, users of these technologies.

Information and knowledge have never been more powerful inputs in business but also in our society at large. Facilitating a safe and unhampered flow of information and knowledge is a task where business, governments and other stakeholders need to cooperate and where public-private partnerships have an important role to play. This means working together to maximize opportunities while also addressing threats like cybersecurity that are widely present in our networked world.

Business has an important role in conducting research and development, and in investing in the network and infrastructure, with the objective of extending ICTs' reach and enhancing security. The incentive for business to carry out research and to make these investments is far greater in environments with legal certainty and where intellectual property rights are protected.

Companies around the world have already demonstrated their engagement through health, education and training initiatives in the developing world that support the UN's Millenium Development Goals. Finding innovative solutions and taking sustainable initiatives are strengths that business brings to the table.

We look to governments and intergovernmental organizations to ensure the appropriate legal frameworks are in place while avoiding over-regulation; so, many more investments can be made. Ensuring an environment that is competitive will help attract the necessary investment while also

benefiting consumers with more choice and lower costs. To realize the goals of this alliance, governments must make it a priority to set up stable environments that create incentives for entrepreneurship and foster innovation.

Business supports the position that GAID should not duplicate efforts by creating new initiatives. Instead, the Alliance should be a catalyst for coordinating and scaling up existing activities and for exchanging best practices. Bringing stakeholders together and building on our various strengths to ensure more efficient outcomes for existing projects is surely a very promising path.

Thank you.