



**International Chamber of Commerce**

*The world business organization*

An ICC initiative

**BASIS**

Business Action to Support  
the Information Society

## **Guy Sebban, ICC Secretary General's Address to the United Nations Global Youth Forum**

*24 September 2007, Geneva, Switzerland*

Good afternoon, excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to participate in the GAID Global Youth Forum, as a member of the GAID steering committee, in my capacity as the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and on behalf of the ICC initiative, Business Action to Support the Information Society, or BASIS for short.

As some of you know, ICC is a membership organization based in Paris, which represents businesses of all sizes and sectors hailing from all over the world. ICC was created in 1919 to support the growth of world trade and investment, and to promote peace through trading partnerships. Today, these core values are still very much a part of ICC. Today we are still working to promote trade across borders, support free enterprise and foster entrepreneurship in all sectors.

For ICC member companies to continue thriving, they must continue to innovate and invest, which is how companies contribute to economic growth---nationally, regionally and internationally.

To ensure companies can do their part in creating jobs, a powerful motor of wealth creation, ICC represents companies' interests in many global forums. Recognizing the important role business plays in information and communications, or ICTs, ICC set up BASIS last year. BASIS brings together leading technical and business experts to contribute expertise and experience in global level discussions on critical issues, such as ICTs and Internet governance.

ICC and BASIS members believe that one of the main objectives of GAID and the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is to create a people-centred information society. Business is playing an important role to make this a reality for more people in more countries.

Young people are critical to this goal: they are the business leaders of tomorrow. The youth of today learn quickly. They are quick studies of information and communication technologies (ICTs). And they are more willing to take risks - an essential ingredient for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Today as we are gathered at the GAID Global Youth Forum, let us reflect on how the models for learning have evolved. In the past, young people traditionally learned from adults. In the new model--- especially concerning ICTs and the Internet - it is adults who learn from youngsters.

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This is especially true when we see so many young faces running ICT startups in many countries. Young people have new ideas. They are discovering new ways of communicating and learning. Their creativity is boundless.

These industries are developing at a rapid pace. ICT applications and services and Internet uses are growing by leaps and bounds.

Which raises an important question for this forum: what do young people need to succeed under this new ICT model?

The formula for their success has three components.

First, we need governments to put in place policy, regulatory and legal structures that promote investment, foster entrepreneurship and stimulate innovation. This means a pro-competitive approach to policy frameworks, telecommunications liberalization, a sound legal system, and appropriate intellectual property rights protections.

This also means reducing 'red-tape' to make it easier for an entrepreneur to start a company, hire and train workers, take risks, and expand. It also means making sure boys and girls get the basic education and skills training they need to land good jobs, be creative, and build new enterprises.

Second, we need companies to give young people a chance to prove themselves, and for companies to provide skills training. This ensures that young people can evolve professionally and adapt to new technologies and innovations.

Third, we need government and business to communicate and to work together at the national level to develop the policy frameworks that will support the growth and integration of ICTs into the fabric of everyday commerce.

More public-private and multistakeholder partnerships are needed to build ICT infrastructure and services so young people continue to develop ICTs, which are crucial to social development and economic growth.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that young people hold the keys to the future - for countries, businesses, and societies around the world. Let us use this opportunity provided by the Global Youth Forum. Let us understand what we all need to do, to support young people, and to ensure that our future leaders of business, government and civil society have the tools and inspiration they need.

Thank you.