



International Chamber of Commerce

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An ICC initiative

BASIS

Business Action to Support
the Information Society

Internet Governance Forum (IGF) **30 October - 2 November 2006, Athens Greece**

Speech by Guy Sebban, ICC Secretary-General

Opening Ceremony - Monday 30 October (10.00-13.00)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today at this first Internet Governance Forum and to share the podium with such distinguished speakers.

As Secretary General of ICC, I will speak here on behalf of global business, by this I mean companies from all parts of the world, in developed and developing countries.

I would like to thank our kind hosts, and specially Prime Minister Karamanlis and the people of Greece. Mr Nitin Desai, Chairman of the IGF advisory group and Mr Markus Kummer, head of the IGF secretariat - thank you for your great efforts in bringing us together on this historic occasion.

The world business organization, ICC, represents companies of all sizes in all sectors. Through our new initiative, Business Action to Support the Information Society -known as BASIS - global business contributes its expertise and perspective on developing the information society to reach its full potential.

Our vision is of an inclusive, people-centred information society: One where people can express themselves freely; where people everywhere are empowered by the huge amount of information and knowledge made available, and by their ability to use it to shape the future.

Thanks to entrepreneurship, investment and a drive to innovate, business has played an important pioneering role in the Internet's development thus far. This major contribution will continue through the productive resources that companies around the world provide to the information society and through working with multi-stakeholder partners.

We believe the calls to increase people's ability to participate in the Internet's development is critical. We welcome the opportunity provided by the IGF to join other stakeholders on an equal footing; to share our respective expertise; and to benefit from a valuable exchange.

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Building on the foundation of the World Summit on the Information Society, the IGF represents an important advance. Business experts from many countries are here to share, listen and learn, alongside the other stakeholder groups enriching this process. In order to get involved, people need education, information and training. Business believes that human and institutional capacity building are the cornerstones of success in getting more people to participate in meaningful, productive deliberations and decision-making bodies.

This effort of raising people's skill levels, understanding and participation can only be effective if all stakeholders have input and offer their expertise. So these multi-stakeholder discussions facilitated by the IGF are essential to moving towards our vision. The expert-based sessions occurring this week will allow all participating stakeholders to enhance our understanding of the issues and to return to our national and regional contexts better equipped to advance them.

Considering these Internet governance issues together will also help identify areas in which more progress is needed, ideally moving us toward greater involvement from all stakeholder groups, particularly in developing countries. In addition, these discussions can provide a basis for increased cooperation among the many organizations working on Internet governance-related issues.

How could the flow of information and the access to knowledge that is available to people be increased in a cost effective manner and a secure environment?

... and

How could more and more people with different cultures and different language skills take advantage of such an evolution?

... These are certainly among the key questions that this forum will raise.

Following this first forum we hope attendees will take many ideas home to continue the discussion and take action. This helps build sustainable, effective participation in Internet governance activities, and promotes informed and constructive national and regional discussions.

When the IGF closes on Thursday, we hope to hear people say the dialogues on these issues were substantive. We hope everyone will have learned something new and met new people and organizations to work with in the future. We hope that every participant leaves Athens with a vision of how they personally can contribute to making the information society more inclusive and people-centred.

The success of the Internet is largely due to its ability to link people and empower them with more information and knowledge than ever imagined. This IGF stands to succeed on the same grounds, as participants deepen their understanding of key issues; identify new ways of cooperating with others; and go on to use what they have learned to make a difference at home.

Thank you for your attention.