

## **WSIS action lines Forum [13 May 2013 in Geneva]**

### **Opening remarks on behalf of ICC-BASIS**

**Mr S. Ramadorai, BASIS Chair**

Firstly, thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of ICC's BASIS-initiative members at this year's Forum.

Our special thanks to the ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré, as well as the other WSIS Action Line facilitators - UNCTAD, UNDP and UNESCO. I would also like to acknowledge the participation of all stakeholders at this event.

As with others, the 'multi-stakeholder' approach for Internet and Information policy dialogues is essential, and without civil society, business, technical, academia, and government representation, we believe that our dialogues are disadvantaged.

As many of you would know, the International Chamber of Commerce (or ICC) and its BASIS-initiative represent global business from across sectors and geographies. All businesses touch the Internet and the Information society today, regardless of sector. And all businesses – micro, small, medium and large - play an important role in the Information society, and are major contributors to opportunities around investment, innovation, and economic growth.

It is therefore a privilege to be here on behalf of ICC-BASIS.

Today, I would like to speak on three areas –

- 1) Share a background of ICC's and business engagement in the Internet governance and Information society discussions;
- 2) Speak about the recent (WSIS +10) review event and process;

And 3) Share an illustrative example from my own country, India.

If I may share a background, the ICC was the focal point for business during the World Summit on the Information Society preparatory processes. It also

represented global business at the Summits in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 through the ICC initiative, the 'Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors', or CCBI.

During this period of time, we did what we believe, was important and relevant.

We brought together businesses from around the world and across sectors to actively contribute to the WSIS. Over the years it has been a pleasure to be engaged in the processes established by the WSIS, such as this important event, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and discussions around 'enhanced cooperation'.

After Tunis in 2006, and the adoption of the Tunis agenda that outlined key principles and was signed by heads of state, ICC launched the BASIS initiative, or 'Business Action to Support the Information Society'. Today, BASIS continues to bring business experience and expertise to the processes established by the WSIS.

Now, let me touch upon the recent (WSIS +10) review event and process.

Last month, ICC-BASIS members and ICC's Secretary General participated in the first (WSIS +10) Review event organized by the lead-action line facilitator agencies, hosted at the UNESCO in Paris.

In our view, this first (WSIS +10) review event was a success and we are very pleased with both the approach taken to the outcome document, and the document itself. It brought together all stakeholders to prepare the event and organize key discussion sessions on a range of WSIS-related topics.

The event was also part of enhancing cooperation among stakeholders. The WSIS has established that the Information Society is about all stakeholders; that the multi-stakeholder approach to developing policies that relate to the Internet and ICTs is the only way to ensure that 'informed policy choices' are made, and that the Information Society continues to grow.

We at ICC-BASIS believe that the (WSIS +10) review process going forward should build on the fully multi-stakeholder inclusive example of this first Review event.

There have been many developments in the Internet ecosystem during and since the WSIS in Tunis. The Internet governance frameworks exist through the Tunis Agenda, and through the work of respective institutions in the Internet's eco-system.

One important example of how these institutions are living organizations, and engaging with all stakeholders, is the unique multi-stakeholder 'accountability and transparency review team number 2' which has recently been established to continue the work to strengthen ICANN and its evolution towards an even more inclusive and independent organization. This is a unique multi-stakeholder review mechanism institutionalized in the Internet eco-system.

Each year, the WSIS Action Lines Forum has an important role in gathering stakeholders to share experiences and information regarding concrete initiatives that are helping to implement the WSIS Action Line goals. An opportunity that gives people a chance to learn what initiatives are working, identify challenges faced in trying to put such actions into place, and to explore how these initiatives can be replicated or scaled up.

This 'learning, adaption and adoption' process is critical to our collective efforts to realize the goals of the WSIS - particularly in the lead up to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In this context I would like to share with you, an example from India that, I believe, truly represents this effort.

India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme acts on the legal guarantee of a minimum of 100 days wage employment in a financial year to adult members of a rural household, who are in need of employment. This Scheme enhances the livelihood security of households in

rural areas by providing manual work that develops the infrastructure base of that area.

One sees that 'wage employment' by governments in emerging nations tend to face typical issues. Issues of discrimination, middlemen, lack of muster rolls, corruption, unequal wages among men and women, delayed payments, etc.

If implemented through traditional means, leakage of funds meant for the rural poor would have been a sad reality. However in a great collaborative effort, Tata Consultancy Services – a BASIS member, and a company of which I am Vice-Chairman, has worked with the State Govt of Andhra Pradesh in India to implement an IT-based solution to run this Scheme in that state.

An effort that has not only enabled clarity of transactions and accountability of the Scheme, but also Social Auditing of the programme!

Issuance of job cards to rural households, a Biometric Attendance and Measurements System, Work allocations; Electronic Funds Management, Payment of wages using biometric authentication, etc have gone a long way in driving efficiency and transparency in the State.

The scale of this project is huge, and even more so is its impact on the economic condition of rural families. Over 30 million beneficiaries from 16 million households have received over 3 billion US\$ equivalent in wages since the scheme's inception. And remember, this is just one Indian state!

Friends, the broader point I make here is that there is a critical role for businesses to partner and invest in the Information Society infrastructure, and create and implement technology solutions that aid sustainable development. This would be possible only when one allows free flow of information and brings more and more people on to the information bandwagon.

As a program the WSIS holds in its hands the dreams of millions that have remain untouched by the benefits of technology. It also holds a promise for other millions who may have been touched, but are yet to utilize its benefits in full measure.

A lot of work has been done, but a lot still remains to be done.

*We would like to see* successful initiatives take on a ‘snowballing’ effect, and spread to those that have not yet benefitted.

*We would like to see* more representation of business participants - including Small & Medium enterprises and ‘Developing country’ businesses - that could bring diverse perspectives to the table.

*And we would like to see* much more public awareness of success stories of initiatives that are helping to implement the WSIS Action Line goals.

*In conclusion*, ICC and its BASIS-initiative pledge to continue active engagement in the post-WSIS processes, forums and activities, as well as the (WSIS +10) review process.

To reach our shared goal of an ‘inclusive and people-centred information society’, we all need to continue to work together.

It is a shared responsibility and business looks forward to doing its part.

Thank you.