

**Internet Governance Forum 2008  
3-6 December, Hyderabad, India**

**Opening speech  
By Subramaniam Ramadorai  
BASIS Chair, and CEO and Managing Director of Tata  
Consultancy Services**

*Welcome*

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of BASIS- Business Action to Support the Information Society – an International Chamber of Commerce Initiative, and my company Tata Consultancy Services, it is my great pleasure to join our hosts in welcoming you all to my home country, India and this third Internet Governance Forum.

*[Thank you]*

I would like to thank our hosts, the Indian government, sponsoring organizations and the people of India; as well as Nitin Desai, the Special Adviser for Internet governance to the United Nations Secretary General and Chair of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group, and Markus Kummer, the Executive Coordinator of the IGF secretariat and his team.

*[Note to Mr Ramadorai: If there are special Indian government ministers or prime minister are in the room you will need to thank them too!]*

I would also like to extend a special thank you to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Undersecretary General Sha Zukang, and Assistant Secretary General Kwame Jomo.

In light of recent events I extend a special thank you to the people of India for their hospitality and thank each and every one of you who has come to the IGF for your show of solidarity and support for the people of India.

*[Introduction]*

Earlier this year I assumed responsibility as Chair of BASIS. Bringing global business experience to this event, BASIS draws together companies and associations from a wide range of sectors and geographies. I am involved in BASIS because of my conviction that

as one of the major stakeholders, business has a fundamental role to play in the continued global development of the Internet. BASIS members will make significant contributions to discussions that will take place over the next four days.

It is both an exciting and challenging time to embark on the Internet governance dialogues ahead of us. It is also particularly fitting that we are gathered here in India – a country embracing new technologies – for the occasion. The success of my company is but one indication of the vibrancy of this sector in my home country.

*[Benefits]*

Today, there are 1.5 billion Internet users. Thanks to the Internet, the world is witnessing the emergence of innovative new business models that are promoting an inclusive and global information society.

Business continues to play a significant role facilitating Internet access and changing the lives of the myriad of people it reaches. To take one example, each year, the ICC World Business and Development Awards recognize business initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This year, among the winning entries were several ICT and Internet initiatives – highlighting their benefits for social and economic development. Projects varied in size and ambition from providing mobile banking services in Africa to raising awareness within grass-root communities, of diseases such as AIDS, and what action can be taken to combat them.

Businesses are making significant contributions to skills development and human and institutional capacity building, essential to bringing the benefits of the Internet to more people. And we don't do this exclusively for philanthropic reasons. It also makes good business sense to help others access the Internet. It is part of the enabling environment to develop well-educated workforces which in turn ensures well-functioning organizations.

*[Challenges]*

And yet with all the benefits the Internet has to offer, today approximately five billion people across the globe still do not have access to it.

So, to create an even more inclusive, innovative and productive environment, what challenges do we face? On one hand, lack of a dependable electricity source creates access problems for many people in developing countries: especially those in rural areas. For those with Internet access, on the other hand, challenges range from data and privacy protection to keeping our children safe from Internet predators.

Every step forward in Internet development brings with it new challenges for discussion. While improving access to information and services, convergence for example – in all of its forms – raises new issues. ICC-BASIS and the Government of Finland’s workshop this Friday will explore convergence. We look forward to seeing you there.

*[Solutions - The business view]*

One thing that unites us here in Hyderabad is our common desire to expand the benefits of the Internet to the next billion users.

Internet governance requires the input of all stakeholders. Business, governments, the technical community, civil society: We must all work together: listening, contributing, exchanging views and best practices. This is how we learn from each other and build partnerships. We must discuss openly and candidly at the international level so that informed policy approaches can be implemented at the national and regional levels.

Over the next four days, ICC and BASIS members will actively express business views and experiences. Our view is important because we have diverse experience and can help identify what has and hasn’t worked; and why it does or doesn’t work from our perspectives.

Business recognizes that technology alone cannot provide all of the solutions. Likewise, no stakeholder can effectively address these issues alone.

The innovative and competitive nature of the private sector has been a significant driver of innovation and the rapid Internet development we have seen to date.

Business knows that continued Internet development requires creativity and investment in infrastructures, as well as competitive and open markets. We all depend on informed policy making – which results from working with all stakeholders – to help create such environments in which innovation and investment can thrive.

In the current economic climate entrepreneurs and investors will look for more predictability and stability before investing time or money in Internet ventures. The private sector believes that the Internet can be part of the solution to the current crisis.

We have seen how competitive markets push prices down and in turn enable those at the lower end of the income pyramid to be able to afford access to the Internet. When addressing Internet issues over the coming days, I urge you to consider how competition and economies of scale have facilitated Internet access around the world.

We must also strive to achieve security for our critical infrastructures and for Internet users alike. To protect data and privacy, and prevent users falling victims to cybercrime,

we must continue building a culture of cyber security. For us to do this, we need to understand what cyber security means in practice, and what role everyone has to play.

Combined, these elements lay the foundations for innovation and entrepreneurship to thrive. This is essential for bringing the social and economic benefits of the Internet to all.

Business can help devise new and better tools, products, solutions, and policies. I encourage you all to visit our booth in the global village. There we will be happy to introduce you to our range of ICC and BASIS toolkits and policy guides as well as discuss ways in which we can strengthen our ties.

*[Solutions – Global]*

The IGF is a valuable opportunity to discuss Internet governance issues together on an equal footing. I look forward to hearing the input of other stakeholders during our time here. The experiences and views shared here are tangible and should be carefully considered by each of us in our efforts going forward. They will inform public policy development and government activities. They will help policy makers work with national stakeholders, to shape an environment that suits their needs.

*[Conclusion]*

There is a proverb you may be familiar with: “You can never step into the same river twice”. A year has passed since we last met. The IGF, our experiences, and circumstances have changed since Rio. We should allow our river to continue to run its course and help lead the way toward Egypt next year.

I therefore urge each one of you to make every effort to build upon the discussions undertaken a year ago in Rio and to make this year’s IGF a great success.

Thank you.