

**Internet Governance Forum 2008  
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**Opening speech**

**By Subramaniam Ramadorai**

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*Welcome*

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen. It has been a difficult week for all of us here, especially those of us who are from Mumbai. The heinous terrorist attacks in my city have left us feeling numb and upset about the loss of innocent lives. However, I am glad to report that the famous go-getting spirit of Mumbai, though impacted by the violent attacks, has not been broken and the city is getting back to business as usual.

In light of recent events I am heartened that so many of you decided to continue with your visit to India and I extend a special thank you to every person who has come to the IGF for your show of solidarity and support for the people of India.,

So, on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce's BASIS initiative – Business Action to Support the Information Society and my company Tata

Consultancy Services, it is my great pleasure to join our hosts in welcoming you to my home country, India and this third Internet Governance Forum.

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

Last but not least, I would also like to extend a special thank you to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Undersecretary General Sha Zukang, and Assistant Secretary General Kwame Jomo for their support.

*[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 a major stakeholder, business has a fundamental role to play in the continued, global

development of the Internet. I am sure that 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 for the occasion. We are a country that is relying on technology to play an active role in economic and social development. India continues to embrace new technologies and leapfrog older technologies. Tata Consultancy Services has transformed existing business models in technology-based services. I am pleased the success of my company is but one indication of the vibrancy of this sector in my home country.

*[Benefits]*

Globally, 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 thereby changing the lives of the people it reaches. To take one example, each year, the ICC World Business and Development Awards recognize 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 possible actions to combat them. My company, TCS, also plays a role in bringing the positive impact of the Internet to bear upon communities. Our mKrishi project which brings the power of information and knowledge to rural farmers in India through the Internet and the cell phone has been recognised as one of this year’s most innovative uses of technology by the Wall Street Journal.

Business is also helping create an enabling environment to help more people jump onto the “Internet express” by making significant contributions to skills development and human and institutional capacity building. This is essential

to bringing the benefits of the Internet to more people. And we don't do this exclusively for philanthropic reasons. It makes good business sense to help others access the Internet as a well-educated workforce 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. Since they do not have sufficiently reliable Internet access to manage the flow of data needed, people in remote areas have difficulty accessing useful and important information,

We also need to look for cost-effective devices that enable everybody to become a "netizen". In India and many other emerging economies, the cell

phone, rather than the PC, seems to be the preferred mode of accessing the Internet.

On the other hand, those who already have Internet access face challenges that range from data and privacy protection to keeping our children safe from Internet predators.

I believe, every step forward in Internet development brings with it new challenges that we need to discuss. 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 and 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.

Business recognizes that technology alone cannot provide all of the solutions. Likewise, no stakeholder can effectively address these issues alone. But the key driver remains the innovative and competitive nature of the private sector that has spurred 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. Tata has been working with a leading NGO to develop a system to help rural communities, even those that do not have any direct Internet access, to not only organise, use, and manage information but most importantly, to be able to share it among themselves quickly and easily. The ability to do this without Internet connectivity is a compelling motivator to bring more

communities into the information fold, but the benefits increase dramatically if the village has Internet connectivity. 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.

The global business 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.

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 to protect data. This issue has become extremely critical with new forms of cyber crime emerging each day from various parts of the globe. There are several sessions tomorrow on this critical subject and I hope that all of you will contribute to develop new ideas and suggestions that can take the discussion to the next level.

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 policymakers 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 once again for coming and I hope while you are here in this historic city, you will find some time to explore its hidden gems. And remember, Hyderabad is like E-bay, a great place to find a bargain!

Thank you.