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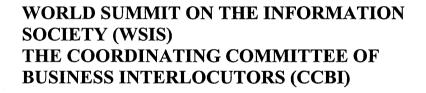
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WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF BUSINESS INTERLOCUTORS (CCBI)

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WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF BUSINESS INTERLOCUTORS (CCBI)
ROLES AND MESSAGE

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I. WHAT ARE THE CONTENTS AND THEMES THAT BUSINESS SUPPORTS FOR THE SUMMIT?

A. FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

Business believes that the Summit should prioritize its content and themes to focus on the fundamental building blocks of an information society. With such a focus, governments can create a meaningful framework for demonstrable progress toward the long-term sustainability of a truly global information society.

B. FOSTER THE CREATION OF MARKETS THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

The priority building blocks must support the creation of markets by fostering competitive policy frameworks and public/private partnerships to facilitate a connected, educated and healthy population that can increasingly become engaged in the information society.

C. MINIMIZE DUPLICATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Many cross-border issues have already been and are being coordinated by international fora such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Hague Conference and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and others. These initiatives should be encouraged, supported and promoted by all, and WSIS should not attempt to duplicate efforts in this regard.

II. KEY MESSAGES AND WHAT BUSINESS EXPECTS FROM THE SUMMIT

A. ICT AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Investment in information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities is incontrovertibly linked to both economic and social growth. Therefore, business strongly believes that the Summit must result in expanded awareness by political leaders throughout the world of the value of ICT as a tool for development, economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Social Development: If the crucial importance of ICT as an indispensable tool for development is not recognized then enhancement of access to ICT capabilities will not be given the requisite high priority in economic development policy prescriptions. Therefore, rather than perpetuating an either/or approach to the key tools for development by viewing ICT capabilities as less important than the direct needs for clean water, sanitation, schooling, health, and other pressing development concerns, ICT should be leveraged as a complementary tool in addressing these needs.

Economic Growth: In recent years, certain nations have demonstrated an ability to enjoy heretofore unimaginable and unpredictable rates of economic growth. The business community is convinced that this is attributable to something more than adjustment of capital and labour inputs, and that the core stimulus unquestionably includes productivity gains throughout the economy resulting from innovation in and deployment of ICT capabilities.

B. COMPETITION AS THE DRIVING POLICY OBJECTIVE

Commitments by political leaders to favour competition as a preferred means of governing the delivery of ICT products, services and capabilities. This may be evidenced by pledges to adopt policies to: (i) eliminate or reduce investment restrictions; (ii) promote pro-competitive policy frameworks for basic telecommunications; (iii) establish independent telecommunications regulatory authorities; (iv) foster and expedite the deployment of e-commerce, e-government, telemedicine, distance education, and other

productivity enhancing and socially useful ICT applications. Markets characterized by maximum competition experience, speedier diffusion of technology, broadened markets, heightened numbers of new market entrants and investment, expanded consumer choice, reduced prices and spurred innovation.

C. ENTREPRENEURSHIP MUST BE FOSTERED

Commitments by political leaders to foster entrepreneurship is essential given that the ICT infrastructure, products and services are driven by the private sector.

The keys to promoting local entrepreneurship include:

- alleviating administrative obstacles and tax burdens which in turn help enterprise progress.
- ensuring trustworthy legal systems.
- reducing bureaucracy at all levels of society.
- fighting corruption.
- establishing transparent processes for policy development – this must be part of action, not just a word.
- changing the cultural approach to risk-taking, bankruptcy, and failure. This is a primary factor in how a country's entrepreneurs will act and react. Thus, working towards a tone of acceptance and acknowledgment of the need for risk-taking (and possible negative consequences) is fundamental to establishing a culture of innovative business.
- cultivating human resources through investment in education and life-long training to maximize ICT as a tool for economic growth
- creating a strong financial sector that can support investment and take responsibility for the consequences of risk and investment
- establishing 'one-stop-shopping' for the administrative needs of entrepreneurs is critical and the role played by diminishing the burdens on entrepreneurs and new businesses to get started cannot be underestimated

D. GOVERNMENTS MUST SERVE AS EARLY ADOPTERS

Commitments by political leaders to recognize the importance of governments as early adopters will result in improved communication with their citizens, increase awareness and drive demand for ICTs. Fair procurement processes should be an integral part of these initiatives.

E. DEVELOPMENT OF TIMETABLES AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

Commitments by political leaders to attach timetables and other measurement tools to Summit proclamations will provide on-going means of assessing progress, pinpointing accountability and maintaining a sense of urgency. Consistent with the objective to establish pro-competitive policies, business feels that well-conceived and articulated visions and approaches – or roadmaps – for attracting and harnessing advanced information and communications capabilities are essential precursors to the evolution of individual nations toward levels of participation in the "information society" that are comparable to those of other nations and that enhance national comparative advantage. Accordingly, Summit delegates should dedicate their nations to creating and refining such strategies within prescribed time limits.

F. A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WE MEAN BY THE INFORMATION SOCIETY WOULD BE USEFUL

This will enable national policy makers to deal most effectively and in a coordinated way with the inherently global dynamics that underlie the increasingly important role of ICTs in all aspects of modern day life.

III. HOW CAN BUSINESS CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE SUMMIT?

The business community looks forward to contributing to the Summit by providing input to the Summit participants about the realities, requirements and constraints that impinge on businesses when they decide whether to expend the financial, human and technological resources with which they have been entrusted in the development, deployment, operation and modernization of ICT capabilities.

The business community plans to do this in a number of ways:

- formal and informal discussion sessions to share experiences and express viewpoints at regional, thematic and other preparatory meetings for the Summit;

- advocate the adoption of business viewpoints on substantive issues to government officials in nations wherein CCBI members conduct business operations; and

- conduct discussion sessions to familiarize Summit delegates with the experiences of the business community and convey what works – and what does not work – in attracting private-sector investment in ICTs.

IV. HOW DOES BUSINESS FEEL ABOUT SUMMIT PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES?

Agreement is essential. While the Summit will provide a forum for dialogue and debate, a concerted and dedicated effort by all to reach agreements is critical. Advancing toward and achieving consensus positions on the substantive issues underlying the subjects of the Summit is essential.

Dialogue and debate are important. An essential prerequisite to effective public policy making is widespread agreement by and among all affected stakeholder interests. This can only be achieved through vigorous, open and widespread dialogue and debate.

Flexibility is key. The speed and unpredictability with which the technologies and other factors underlying the "information society" are evolving requires that Summit procedures and processes be flexible. This can be obtained by resisting rigid and bureaucratic processes and will increase the likelihood of Summit declarations and commitments being relevant, compelling, and productive.

One size does not fit all. To maximize the relevance and value of their declarations and commitments, Summit delegates should consider that different conditions underlie evolution toward an "information society" in different places. Thus, they should avoid the imposition of identical prescriptions, policy frameworks or time-frames on all nations.

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V. WHAT IS THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS INTERLOCUTORS?

The Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) is the voice of business in the Summit.

Principals of the Summit host countries and executive secretariat invited the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to create the CCBI as a vehicle through which to mobilize and coordinate the involvement of the worldwide business community in the processes leading to and culminating in the Summit.

The CCBI is made up of – and open to all – representatives of individual business firms, as well as of associations and other organizations that represent business interests.

Among the organizations actively involved in the work of the CCBI, in addition to ICC, are: the Business Council of the United Nations, Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD; Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce; Global Information Infrastructure Commission; Money Matters Institute; United States Council on International Business; World Economic Forum; and World Information Technology and Services Alliance.

VI. WHY IS THE WORLDWIDE BUSINESS COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF THE SUMMIT?

If the Summit is successful, the stage will be set throughout the world for enhanced deployment of products and capabilities based on information and communications technologies (ICTs). Undoubtedly, this will be of immediate and direct benefit to the commercial producers and purveyors of such goods and services. More importantly, it will dramatically enhance overall business interests by unleashing new forms of wealth creation and fostering national economic growth. This, in turn, will stabilize markets and expand opportunities for international commerce – facilitating social growth, reducing poverty, empowering individual citizens, and lessening geo-political tensions.

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF BUSINESS INTERLOCUTORS (CCBI)

BUSINESS VIEW ON SUMMIT OUTCOMES

What does business need as outcomes from this Summit?

1. Focus on Information Society Building Blocks
2. Recognize the Importance of Pro-Competitive Policies and Private Sector Investment
3. Link ICT investment to economic development, social growth and poverty reduction
4. Incorporate Measuring and Accounting tools in Summit pronouncements
5. Prescribe National ICT Strategies
6. Acknowledge the critical role of Business in the Future of the Information Society

1. Focus on Information Society Building Blocks:

The Summit's substantive agenda needs to be focused very clearly on the fundamental building blocks of the information society, and thus far there has not been sufficient focus or prioritization.

What would be a concrete reflection of this focus? A dramatically improved articulation of the themes and content for the Summit as the outcome of PrepCom II which incorporate the basic issues below.

2. Recognize the Importance of Pro-Competitive Policies and Private Sector Investment

Business needs to see a clear focus by governments on pursuing policy and regulatory frameworks that are pro-competitive and which will create legal, policy and regulatory environments that are conducive to and attract private sector investment in ICTs.

What would be a concrete reflection of this understanding? A collective commitment to develop national ICT strategies within a time-certain period.

3. Link ICT investment to economic development, social growth and poverty reduction

Business needs to know that the world's political leaders fully understand the link between ICT investment and economic growth, and that this awareness is heightened following this Summit to a degree sufficient to warrant consideration of investment by business, where before WSIS, such investment would not be considered.

This summit needs to lead to an increased and comprehensive awareness by national political leaders of how ICT investment can drive economic growth, the enhancement of social well being, and poverty reduction.

What would be a concrete reflection of this understanding? A collective commitment as stated above to develop national ICT strategies within a time-certain period.

4. Incorporate Measuring and Accounting tools in Summit pronouncements:

All commitments made must have a built in form of measurability and accountability otherwise they are hollow and business will be hesitant to engage in a process that is leading to non-measurable outcomes or outcomes that are not concrete. Commitments by governments to ensure that the outcomes of this Summit are developed with markers to enable some form of measurement and future stock-taking to learn and build upon the successes and failures of initiatives.

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What would be a concrete reflection of this? Benchmarking mechanisms built into the outcomes of this Summit to allow for review of the progress governments have made in developing and implementing, for instance, the necessary national policy and regulatory frameworks to promote investment in ICTs.

5. Prescribe National ICT Strategies

The national ICT strategies referred to above should include the following elements:

- actions at national level to create the necessary policy, legal and regulatory environments to attract investment in ICT;

- support for the existing international policy, legal and regulatory initiatives being coordinated by intergovernmental organizations such as the WTO, Hague Convention on Private International law, WIPO etc.;

- actions at a national level to foster entrepreneurship by addressing issues such as corruption, judicial reform, alleviating administrative burdens and reducing bureaucracy at all levels of society;

- encouragement of competitive policies through legislative and administrative changes;

- engagement with national business communities to create public-private partnerships to promote ICTs as a tool for economic development and establish transparent processes for policy development;

- actions to eliminate or reduce investment restrictions, promote pro-competitive policy frameworks for basic telecommunications and establish independent telecommunications regulatory authorities;

- actions to expedite and encourage the deployment of e-commerce, e-government, telemedicine, distance education, and other productivity enhancing and socially useful ICT applications;

- provisions to cultivate human resources through investment in education and life-long training;

- commitment to create a strong financial sector that can support investment and take responsibility for the consequences of risk and investment;

- the cultural approach to risk-taking, bankruptcy and failure is a strong factor in how a country's entrepreneurs will act and react-thus cultivating a tone of acceptance and acknowledgement of the need for risk-taking and possible negative consequences is fundamental to establishing a culture of innovative business.

6. Acknowledge the critical role of Business to the Future of the Information Society

The critical role of the private sector must be recognized more clearly and actively in the WSIS process.

This has not been adequately done to date.

This is the only way to enable the regional leadership to be responsive to the needs of business and thereby encourage more engagement by the business entities and their representatives.

If the WSIS leads to the right conditions, what will business do?

Given the right conditions, business will assume the risks necessary, and invest.
Absent that investment, there is no 'information society'.

Business is the only sector of society with the capability to generate massive amounts of capital required to build the infrastructure, technology, and tools to deploy the information society.
'No investment, no information society'.