

Internet Governance, Internet Innovation and Economic Competitiveness

Opening Remarks by Betty E. King

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Other International Organizations

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Welcome to the U.S. Mission Geneva. I am very pleased all of you have taken time to join us for this conference.

A priority for President Obama from day one and it continues to be a hallmark of this administration, is our outreach and engagement, not just with other countries, but with non-government actors.

In the 21st century we recognize that governments alone cannot solve all our problems. We must work broadly, with the business community, with civil society, and with the technical and academic communities and others across the globe on challenging transnational issues.

In two major policy speeches in January 2010 and February 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promoted the U.S. push for global Internet freedom and “reaffirmed U.S. support for a free and open Internet and greater access for people everywhere. The Internet has become the public space of the 21st century – the world’s town square, classroom, marketplace, coffeehouse, and nightclub. We all shape and are shaped by what happens there, all 2 billion of us and counting. And that presents a challenge. To maintain an Internet that delivers the greatest possible benefits to the world, we need to have a serious conversation about the principles that will guide us, what rules exist and should not exist and why, what behaviors should be encouraged or discouraged and how.”

The United Nations in Geneva provides a crucial venue for the United States to explain its positions on key Internet issues to the international community.

This is the second conference the US Mission has organized this year to discuss important Internet issues:

On March 4, 2011, in conjunction with the 16th session of UN Human Rights Council, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council Eileen Donahoe organized a panel discussion on Internet Freedoms and Human Rights.

And in early June, the U.S. Mission will host the Internet Freedom Fellows, grassroots activists from around the world who use the internet and new media platforms to promote human rights, democracy and freedom of expression.

Today, we have organized panel discussions on Internet Governance and Internet Innovation and Economic Development and how they relate to the overall agenda of an open Internet governed by all stakeholders.

A key principle that the United States wants to preserve and enhance is the multi-stakeholder model for dealing with these issues. Multi-stakeholder organizations have played a major role in the design and operation of the Internet and are directly responsible for its success.

We believe that maintaining and extending the multi-stakeholder model is important for ensuring the Internet remains a fertile field for innovation and an engine for much needed economic growth.

One forum where all stakeholders are able to participate collectively is the Internet Governance Forum. The IGF is the very embodiment of the multi-stakeholder Internet governance model. We are pleased that the United Nations has renewed the mandate for an additional five years. This year's IGF will be held in Nairobi, Kenya and we have Alice Wanjira-Munyua, Chair of the Organizing Committee, 2011 Nairobi Internet Governance Forum with us today.

Other stakeholders from the around the world, including some of you in this room, are making important contributions everyday to the operation, management and increased use of the Internet.

Promoting greater Internet freedom also makes good economic sense, especially for the developing world. The very open nature of the Internet fuels the freedom of innovation that enables economic growth. Reduced costs of communication and information allow local entrepreneurs to innovate locally and reach global markets.

I hope that I have successfully set the scene for our panels. I look forward to hearing from our panelists and having a further exchange of ideas.

Before we get to our panels, we have taped remarks from Vint Cerf, Global Internet Evangelist from Google.

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