

## CCBI EVENTS

### **The final business statement - WSIS Geneva**

**Speech by Richard D. McCormick\***

#### **Final Plenary, World Summit on the Information Society**

Geneva, 12 December 2003 - Business has been represented at this Summit, and indeed throughout the entire summit preparatory process, by the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors – or CCBI - led by the International Chamber of Commerce, with the active participation of companies and business associations from all regions of the world.

CCBI organized two events during the Summit, attracting wide participation from business, governments and other stakeholders.

One of our discussions focussed on “What makes ICTs effective growth engines” and the other examined “Champions of the Information Society: Young Entrepreneurs, Innovators and Investors.”

Both events highlighted the enormous potential of ICTs. Be it through the delivery of health care, the provision of government services, the encouragement of participatory democracies or the provision of education and training, we have the opportunity with ICTs - as never before - to change so many lives for the better.

But you can't just snap your fingers and have an information society. It requires investment, creativity and innovation – all of the things that business does best.

And business stands ready to make those investments.

To do so, we need to work with governments to create the conditions necessary for investment. Among those conditions are:

- intellectual property rights protection;
- stable and predictable legal systems;
- trade liberalization;
- technology neutrality;
- and a regulatory framework which promotes competition and fosters entrepreneurship.

There has been much discussion at this summit about the issue of so-called “internet governance”. Business believes that this term is a contradiction in terms/a flawed concept/an oxymoron.

The internet is a network of networks. Its success to date – and I think we can all agree it has been spectacular – has relied on its de-centralised nature.

We in business believe this is a model built on coordination and collaboration which works well. The fact that there is no real central locus is one of the internet's most important features.

Let's not blunt this remarkable tool when it is bring about the most positive changes to people's lives.

The decisions we make at this summit, both here in Geneva and in Tunis 2005, will determine whether this fledgling experiment founders or goes on to become a full-scale information revolution.

There has been much talk at this meeting about access – about ways in which we can all work together to create digital opportunities for people in all corners of the world.

Business agrees that cables must be laid, satellites must be used, computers must be distributed - all technologies at our disposal must be employed and infrastructures built so that even the smallest school in the most remote village can log on to the world wide web.

But access alone will not bring all the world's people into this information revolution. By itself, access to the internet will not create an information society.

For what use is internet access if you cannot read or write? What good is a computer if you don't know how to operate it?

Education and training are fundamental building blocks of an information society - and business has a key role to play in the provision of both.

One of the main themes from our business events was the generational differences that exist with respect to ICTs and the internet.

As technologies spread and become more widely available, we are seeing the emergence of a younger generation who have ICTs and the internet in their inner fabric - some say it's in their DNA.

It is our responsibility to ensure that this genetic streak becomes common to young people no matter where they are born in the world.

And for the many people of the generations for whom a mouse is still a rodent, we need to provide education and training so that they too can join the revolution.

What we have with ICTs and the internet are awesome tools. Never before have we been able to share knowledge, create networks and foster human interaction so quickly and efficiently. ICTs and the internet are in their infancy. Their future is bright. As one of their proud parents, business looks forward in helping to give further shape to their future – to taking part in all discussions regarding their development so that, in partnership with others, we can allow these marvelous creations to realize their full potential.

\*Richard D. McCormick is the Honorary Chair of ICC. He delivered this final business statement on behalf of the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI), a network of business organizations and companies who have come together to provide private sector input at the WSIS.

Business at WSIS

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