Remarks by Mr. Art Reilly

on behalf of

International Chamber of Commerce, Business Action to Support the Information Society (ICC-BASIS), Chair of the ICT Policy Committee of the USCIB, Paris

at the Opening Session of the WSIS Forum

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Mr. Secretary General, Director General, Under Secretary General, Deputy Director General, Minister, Director, friends and colleagues

I am honored to have the opportunity to address the Opening Session of the 2010 WSIS Forum on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce. The ICC is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries have interests spanning every sector of private enterprise.

The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and many other intergovernmental bodies, both international and regional, are kept in touch with the views of international business through ICC. For example, we are also very active in the Internet Governance Forum which provides an open, multistakeholder-planned program in which leaders from the various parts of the Internet Governance ecosystem get together to listen and learn about issue and best practices from each other.

As we meet at this midway point between the Tunis World summit and the 2015 date for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we have a chance to look back on progress made and ahead at the tremendous challenges that lie ahead in order to improve the quality of life for people around the world.

Business is proud of its role in the many ecosystems (technical, operational, and creative) that have emerged to support the Information Society.

Despite the recent global economic conditions, Internet and mobile services have continued to expand the services that they offer. Equipment suppliers have continued to innovate to address the wide array of user needs. In addition, businesses, civil society and governments have continued to create new content to benefit and enrich the lives of people. Despite economic setbacks, ICTs growth continues to be dramatic.

Since the 2005 Summit, business has increased the number of Internet subscribers from around 1 billion to 1.8 billion. At the end of 2005, mobile subscribers numbered about 2 billion. Now more than 4.6 billion people are subscribers.

During the past year alone, businesses have begun to serve an additional 200 million and 400 million, Internet and mobile subscribers, respectively.

The explosion in demand and new applications reflect the fact that even in difficult economic times, people and businesses recognize the value of communications and that ICTs can help them be more productive and overcome obstacles of time and distance. In addition, many policy makers have understood that enlightened policies that promote innovation and stimulate investment are critical to the deployment of these enabling technologies. They also understand that ICT policy (& strategy), infrastructure and skills development are critical to the delivery of government services and to workforce development.

Throughout human history, people have innovated. Their innovations have enabled enterprising individuals to increase what they could do:

- Tools like the lever allowed them to lift or move objects larger then themselves
- Fire provided light and warmth, and expanded their food supply
- Modern inventions have allowed people to travel farther and faster, treat diseases, and reduce the time taken to do many routine tasks.

However, none of the above have impacted and had the potential to impact as many aspects of human life as have the Internet and related Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

The Internet and ICTs empower people. They eliminate distance as a limiting factor and reduce many other barriers as well. This is particularly important as we are rapidly approaching 2015 and we seek to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved.

Fundamental to achieving the MDGs is human capacity building, easier access to medical care, increased human productivity, a clearer and sustainable environment, and greater opportunities for women. The ability of ICTs:

- to give people access to not only information, but knowledge,
- to allow medical experts to diagnose and prescribe medicines from a distance, and train others,
- to disseminate best practices to increase food production and facilitate its timely distribution,
- to offer alternatives to more energy intensive technologies and applications, and thus mitigate energy consumption and pollution, and
- to promote international communication and collaboration
- to facilitate freedom of expression and creativity at levels unimaginable in the past

make them essential tools in improving the lives of people as envisioned by the MDGs.

The growth in the Internet and mobile services have enabled scalable and sustainable programs for education using ICTs . Many examples also exist of people, even in remote areas, using the Internet and SMS to access vital health information related to such topics as maternal care and infectious diseases. Connected communities are saving energy and establishing cleaner tomorrows.

However, we cannot become complacent with progress to date.

As Michelangelo is quoted as saying,

"The greatest danger for most people is not that they aim too high and do not reach it but that it is too low and we reach it"

Existing infrastructures will need to not only be extended to reach the next billions of people, but its capacity will need to be increased to accommodate broader bandwidth capabilities. The core Internet traffic is growing at about 46% per year and is increasingly being driven by video. By 2012 some estimate that 50% of the 500 exabytes of core Internet traffic will be video. Exabyte = ten to the power of 18.

Video provides a universal language and will further improve the utilization of ICTs in addressing the MDGs. Broadband deployment will be critical.

We will continue to face challenges. I mentioned earlier that ICT businesses are used to working in ecosystems of multiple suppliers and services providers who compete for business but who must cooperate with many of those same companies in order to develop an end-to-end service, application or product in a global supply chain.

As we take this meeting as a chance to learn what others are doing to achieve the MDGs, we should be not only thinking about what more we can do, but about how we can work better together with others to achieve more to enable people.

In closing, I am reminded of the words of Ryunosuke Satoro, a Japanese poet. He said, " Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."