

World Summit on the Information Society
**The Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors
(CCBI)**

Intersessional Meeting 15 July 2003

INTERVENTION 1

**By Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, President,
Talal Abu-Ghazaleh International (TAGI)**

**GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS VIEWS ON THE
DECLARATION AND ACTION PLAN**

Thank you Chairman, President and distinguished delegates for the opportunity to provide an overview of business views and input on the draft declaration and action plan for the World Summit on the Information Society.

I am speaking on behalf of the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) which is chaired by the International Chamber of Commerce.

CCBI is coordinating the views of global business on the Summit and its participation in the Summit. Other CCBI participating organizations include Business Council of the United Nations, Business Industry Advisory Committee of the OECD, Global Business Dialogue on E-Commerce, Brazilian Chamber of E-Commerce, Global Information

Infrastructure Commission, World Economic Forum, World Information Technology and Services Alliance, to name a few.

CCBI has submitted written comments which are available on the WSIS website, ICC website and in hard copy here today.

**BUSINESS SUPPORTS A SUMMIT THAT FOCUSES ON THE
FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN INFORMATION
SOCIETY:**

We believe that such building blocks are:

- A secure infrastructure: introducing competition and providing a favourable regulatory environment to create the framework necessary to ensure deployment/development of the information infrastructure by business;
- A sound and equitable education and health care system;
- A recognition of the benefits of ICT applications, such as e-learning, e-health and e-government.

**BUSINESS SEEKS GREATER FOCUS AND PRIORITIZATION IN THE
DRAFT DECLARATION AND ACTION PLAN:**

The draft documents focus primarily on general political objectives and not enough on the fundamental building blocks.

These documents should be concise, clear and specific only to the degree appropriate for national heads of state to subscribe. Business recognizes the importance of the political objectives and believes

strongly that the information society is a tool in achieving them. However, we must first ensure a global information society so that it can serve as a tool to promote the political objectives.

BUSINESS BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE WSIS DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION REFLECT THE CRITICAL ROLE AND LEADERSHIP OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY:

Business is the driver of innovation and the owner of the large majority of the infrastructure. Therefore, WSIS should clearly advocate a policy framework that promotes competition, including increased trade liberalization, and private sector investment.

BUSINESS BELIEVES THAT THE ACTION PLAN SHOULD FOCUS ON A SET OF ACHIEVABLE TARGETS AND IDENTIFY HOW THESE TARGETS ARE TO BE REACHED:

The Action Plan sets forth many worthwhile goals but it does not state how to achieve them. One of many examples is paragraph 5, which calls for the creation and provision of low-cost access equipment. In business' view, the only way to achieve this goal is through liberalization and competition. Thus, we believe it is essential that the documents reflect the critical role of competition, not monopoly or government mandates.

BUSINESS STRONGLY ENCOURAGES GOVERNMENTS TO RECOGNIZE EXISTING WORK BY EXPERT AND SPECIALIZED INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DECLARATION AND ACTION PLAN SO AS TO PREVENT DUPLICATION WHICH WILL WASTE LIMITED RESOURCES:

Many intergovernmental organizations are engaged in work relevant to the Information Society. It is essential that the Declaration and Action Plan recognize this work and not encourage duplication or redundancy. Such duplication or redundancy will result in a misallocation of scarce resources needed to bring the global information society to fruition.

THE SUMMIT'S SUCCESS DEPENDS ON A CAREFUL DEFINING AND DELIMITING OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY.

Why is this important? First, it ensures that the Summit has a clear vision of what it will accomplish, what the plan to achieve an information society for all is.

Second, it ensures that the Summit is not 'distracted' by an unwieldy number of issues, and consequentially accomplishes very little or nothing.

Business respectfully proposes the following language:

We the representatives of the peoples of the world...declare our common desire and commitment to facilitate, foster and accelerate the world's evolution toward and advanced Information Society, one...in

which tools for communications and information dissemination become more ubiquitously available than they have been heretofore, so as to facilitate a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

Distinguished delegates, Chairman, President,

As a businessman from a developing country, and region which is striving to fully embrace the opportunities for economic and social growth presented by these wonderful tools-----information and communication technologies-----may I underscore that people in all countries are counting on you to articulate your commitments in these documents in a way that will allow business, and other stakeholders to do their part in implementing this most important declaration and plan of action.

May I humbly recommend that the road to promoting the Information Society starts with the simple existence of the infrastructure to carry information through ICTs. Without that infrastructure, we will not get to our common objectives. Business wants to do its part-----we want to invest, innovate, create jobs and wealth, and contribute to economic and social growth. But, if this Summit and these documents, which serve as the basis for the outcome of this Summit, do not clearly prioritize the creation of the necessary conditions for these actions by business to happen, they will not happen, and it will be many people around the world who are not in this room today, who will have lost the opportunity to be a part of the Information Society.

Chairman, President, distinguished delegates and participants, thank you for this opportunity and your kind attention.