

*CSTD Panel Discussions*  
*26 May 2009, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland*  
*Room XVIII*

**Statement by Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Co-Chair, GAID**  
**10:15 –10:45**

His Excellency Ambassador Eguiguren, Chairman.

Dr. Touré, very competently represented by H.E. Holin Zahao,  
Thank you for calling me the grandfather of ICT and development.

Distinguished guests,

I have the distinct honors and pleasure of saluting you to this joint-session co-organized by the Secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization and the Global Alliance for ICT and Development.

This session is a continuation of a now established tradition initiated two years ago at the request of the Chairman of the Commission. The fact that we are here again today is a testimony to the success of the previous two events that have taken place in 2007 and 2008. These events offer us an excellent opportunity to develop closer linkages between the WSIS follow-up process, with its intense cluster of events that took place just last week, and the work of the Commission. They represent a venue for channeling multi-stakeholder inputs, raising cutting-edge issues, sharing innovative knowledge, expertise and best practice in the intergovernmental process of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

This joint event is quintessential in fulfilling GAID's mandate of mainstreaming information and communications technologies in the broader United Nations Development Agenda. Since its inception, GAID has implemented a comprehensive strategy of advocating for the potential of ICTs to accelerate the pace of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in all major United Nations processes, be it WSIS, FFD, CSTD, the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly. It is in that context that today we are going to discuss the issues of mobile technology and social networking for poverty alleviation, and health with a strong emphasis on innovation, in support of the themes of both CSTD and ECOSOC.

Distinguished Colleagues,

- Mark Twain wrote that a country without a good patent system and good patent laws was “just a crab, and couldn’t travel any way but sideways or backwards”.
- IP rights are one of a country’s main source of competitive advantage.
- Franklin Roosevelt wisely described IP as the fuel that inflamed the fire of genius.
- China’s Premier Wen Jiabao said in 2004: “The future of world competition will be for intellectual property rights”.

- In the U.S. Constitution in Article 1, Section 8: “To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries”.
- The world is transiting (in the privileged part of it) from the information age (the pumping age) into the knowledge age (where information is used intelligently for knowledge creation). Next we shall (hopefully) move up to the wisdom age (where knowledge is used wisely for the benefit of humanity).

You all have heard about the unprecedented spread of mobile telephony around the globe, thanks in no small part to the work of the International Telecommunication Union. My good friend Dr. Touré can tell you more about the advances in connectivity in the developing world. The point is that we now live in an increasingly connected environment that is ripe for innovative solutions for many of the development challenges that we are facing. Opportunities are there for the taking. And indeed we are already witnessing a lot of innovations targeting the developing world. We will hear about some of them in the next two sessions. Note that it is happening despite a very challenging economic environment. Our job is to ensure that the policies recommendations that emerge from our work at the intergovernmental level continue to encourage and nurture such innovations. *I take this opportunity to applaud UNCTAD's reports on the recent global economic crisis*

I would like to bring to your attention the very lively and enriching discussions in the GAID community on the role of ICT in Development. The outcome of these discussions and of our sessions today will contribute to shaping up the agenda of GAID in the coming year, so your contributions are crucial in order to achieve a meaningful impact. I personally, remain to be guided by the vision of my friend, Dr. Toure and by the able stewardship of GAID Executive Director Mr. Sarbuland Khan.

The upcoming GAID Global Forum, scheduled to take place on 2-4 September 2009 in Monterrey, where leaders from governments, the private sector, civil society and academia will get together for a focused dialogue on how to bring about innovation for education in policies and practices. I invite you all to join us in Monterrey. Our incoming Co-Chair Mr. Ramon alberto Garza will host the event and will welcome you there.

In closing, I wish to announce that I plan to prepare a new mission statement to GAID leadership whereby the words "gender equality" and "poverty alleviation" are replaced by more constructive terminology:

" GAID's ICT and development mission shall focus on mobilizing the "better half" of humanity and on job creation for the "poor half" of humanity."

I look forward to our successful deliberations over the course of the day.

Thank you for your attention.