The Broadband Challenge

We, the participants of the Broadband Leadership Summit, address this Challenge to world leaders, top policy-makers, industry leaders, users and consumers.

Communication – a Human Need and a Right

Broadband technologies are fundamentally transforming the way we live. It is vital that no one be excluded from the new global knowledge societies we are building. We believe that communication is not just a human need – it is a right. The greater communication and understanding made possible through access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) can help us overcome the challenges in our complex and interdependent global society.

Broadband as a critical modern infrastructure contributing to economic growth

We believe that the Internet and other ICTs now constitute critical modern resources and are a vital prerequisite for participation in today's growing digital economy. In today's challenging economic climate, recent research has shown that broadband infrastructure and services contribute to economic growth and promote job creation. Expanding access to broadband infrastructure and services must therefore be a top policy priority for countries around the globe, developed and developing alike as well as Least Developed Countries.

We call on governments and business to work together to develop the innovative policy frameworks, business models and financing arrangements needed to facilitate growth in access to broadband worldwide. We also urge them to stimulate content production in local languages and enhance local capacity to benefit from and contribute to the digital revolution.

Benefits of Broadband

The benefits of broadband are profound – in opening up young minds to new horizons through educational technologies; in empowering women to expand their opportunities through genuine choices; in improving awareness of hygiene and healthcare; and in helping family breadwinners find work, a better salary or return on their goods. Through broadband, the provision of public services is transformed to make them global public goods for the global good. Greater access to the Internet and broadband applications and services help accelerate achievement of internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Policy Measures to Promote Broadband

We therefore urge governments to avoid limiting market entry and taxing ICT services unnecessarily to enable broadband markets to realize their full growth potential. We encourage governments to promote coordinated international standards for interoperability and to address the availability of adequate radio frequency spectrum – recognizing that spectrum should be regarded as a resource for socio-economic rather than short-term financial benefit – for our rapidly developing broadband era. We note the importance of the guiding principles of fair competition for promoting broadband access to all.

It is essential to review legislative and regulatory frameworks, many of which are inherited from the last century, to ensure the free and unhindered flow of information in the new virtual, hyper connected world, recognizing that standards and safeguards developed in the physical world should continue to apply in the digital world.

The Fundamental Importance of Content

Connectivity is necessary, but not sufficient. Hand in hand with the roll-out and deployment of broadband networks, it is vital to develop new services, personalized applications and fully multilingual content to ensure that everyone finds their place in the global village online. We call on world leaders to give all their citizens a voice and to give them a presence online, including disadvantaged or marginalized communities such as the elderly, the house-bound, people with special needs, low-skilled workers and the rural poor in agricultural communities, as well as the populations of Least Developed Countries.

We call on world leaders and industry to promote ICT education for women and youth, and to promote policies that facilitate the creation and growth of locally-relevant, commercial and social services delivered over the Internet. For only then can we realize the vision of fully interconnected knowledge societies made possible by broadband.

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1. We call on world leaders to ensure that at least half the developing world's population and 40% of households in developing countries are using broadband Internet by 2015. Consumers in all countries should have access to affordable broadband Internet services, including in developing countries.

2. We call on industry to develop innovative business models needed to realize this vision.

3. We call on governments to make broadband policy universal and to develop the enabling policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure that industry has a stable regulatory space in which to operate, flourish and harness broadband for sustainable human development.

4. We call on governments to develop policies and targets for online health and education at the national level to stimulate demand for broadband services.

5. We call on governments and civil society within a fully inclusive and consultative process to stimulate local content production as well as the development of local language services and applications for an inclusive digital world.