

**Wednesday 10 December,
First Plenary Session**

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**Representative of the International Chamber of Commerce / Coordinating
Committee of Business Interlocutors to the World Summit on the Information
Society**

Geneva, Switzerland

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to be here, on behalf of Microsoft and as a representative of the Summit's business partners – the International Chamber of Commerce Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors – to mark this opening of the World Summit on the Information Society.

We are honored to take part in this Summit where business and civil society have been invited to participate in sessions traditionally reserved for governments, recognizing that we all have an essential role to play. And I thank the United Nations, International Telecommunications Union, and the member governments for this opportunity.

Our purpose in being here is to contribute to a successful Summit. We share the goal of building together a truly global, inclusive and sustainable information society for all. The international business community takes this shared responsibility seriously, and is playing its part in achieving these goals.

We believe that information technology (IT) is a vital tool for helping people, communities, and nations realise their full potential. We welcome the important progress on the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, in particular with regard to the following key statements and principles:

- Education, knowledge, information and communication are at the core of human progress and well being;
- Information technology is a powerful instrument to increase productivity and economic growth, job creation, and improving the quality of life;
- We need to give attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, as well as persons with disabilities;
- The important role of all stakeholders and governments in the promotion of ICTs for development;

- The rule of law is essential to create an enabling environment, accompanied by a supportive, transparent, pro-competitive, technology neutral, and predictable policy framework;
- Intellectual Property protection is important to encourage innovation and creativity, and economic growth, in the Information Society. This includes, we believe, respect for existing international agreements;
- We need to strengthen the trust framework, including information and network security, privacy, and reliability;
- We believe the private sector has an important role to play with regard to investment, and leadership in building the Information Society infrastructure;
- We also recognize the importance of international and regional co-operation, and the value of public-private partnerships in working for digital inclusion.

Kofi Annan has said that information technology is a powerful force that can and must be harnessed to the mission of peace and development, and we would fully agree.

The private sector is deeply committed to digital inclusion. At Microsoft, we believe that digital inclusion is not only achieved by giving people access to information – putting computers in schools and communities or enabling Internet access – but by teaching students, teachers, and life-long learners how to use technology and information to shape their own futures. We are a committed partner for the long term with many governments, NGOs, and communities in supporting IT skills education and life-long learning, through our *Partners in Learning and Unlimited Potential* programmes.

In closing, let me confirm our support and commitment to the tasks ahead, in building an Information Society for all the world's citizens, so they may have the opportunity to realise their full potential.