

**Remarks by Amb. David A. Gross  
ITU Council 2008: High Level Segment  
November 12, 2008  
Geneva**

*Time limit: 10 minutes*

Thank you to our moderator, Mr. Deputy Secretary General, who has been himself a leader on these important issues we will discuss over the next couple days and the important issues we will address in this panel session. I am very pleased to be here with President Kagame and President Compaoré as well as my colleagues, Ministers, and to be a part of these discussions in the High Level Segment of the 2008 Session of the ITU Council. And of course, I would like to thank Secretary General Toure for bringing us all together here for these discussions.

Ensuring the security of cyberspace is a high priority for all of us. Our job as government officials coming together in these multilateral settings is to find ways to work together, so that we can ensure the security of the Internet – both in terms of the stability of its networks and of protecting Internet users against cyber crime.

The United States is deeply concerned about meeting cyber threats. We know that many others share this concern. We also know that we alone cannot achieve a safe and secure Internet; rather, international cooperation is a necessity. Therefore, we, as so many of you, are active in many international fora, including the ITU, APEC, OECD, CITELE, and so forth to address all the various aspects of ongoing cyber threats.

Also of great importance is the responsibility of governments and all stakeholders to ensure that the Internet is not only a secure domain but also one in which information can be accessed and exchanged without hindrance. That is why we also put so much effort into policies and practices that ensure freedom of expression and the free flow of information over the Internet.

Approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide have access to the Internet today. This is more than quadruple the number from just a few years ago. Much of this recent growth has been in the developing world. I believe that with the rate of technological innovation and expansion of access that we are seeing in places like Africa and the Middle East and Asia that number will

continue to increase exponentially and quickly. With the rapid success of mobile phones and other wireless technologies, innovation and competition are quickly bringing Internet access and broadband to hard-to-reach places for the first time. Mobile phones are quickly becoming Internet portals, resulting in a truly world wide web.

The implications of this revolution in affordability and availability are truly profound – economically, socially, and politically. This also implies that increased pressure will be put on countries, especially in the developing world, to focus on infrastructure and capacity building. With access to the Internet comes a greater need for literacy and access to the education and tools that allow people to take full advantage of the technology and knowledge available to them.

Fundamentally, this means that dramatically more people – especially those in the developing world – today have access for the first time to the world's knowledge. Since the year 2000, a billion more people can now use the Internet to learn and speak more freely – if allowed by their governments.

Thus, of course, simply having access to the Internet is not enough. There are those that seek to restrict by various means the types of information their people can access. And so we must continue to work together toward ensuring the Internet is a place where information flows freely.

At the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly in Johannesburg just two weeks ago, ITU members again underscored the importance of the free flow of information over the Internet. About 800 delegates and approximately 1,000 attendees from 99 countries participated at the WTSA. Congratulations to Malcom Johnson for a successful Assembly, where we came to agreement on several important issues.

At the WTSA, we adopted a resolution that emphasizes the value we all as ITU Member States place on an unhindered, unencumbered Internet. The resolution we adopted says that Member States are:

"To refrain from taking any unilateral and/or discriminatory actions that could impede another Member State to access public Internet sites..."

And as was made clear in our deliberations, by "Member States" we mean not only the governments but also the citizens of those states. Therefore, all

agreed that we are to refrain from impeding the access of any citizen of our countries to public Internet websites.

It will continue to be a high priority for the United States, continuing into the next Administration, to find new, effective, and innovative ways to help all the people of the world have access to the Internet and to the information and opportunities it provides.

Thank you. And I look forward to the discussion with my fellow panelists and all of you in the audience.