

United Nations Meets Web 2.0 and ICT Entrepreneurs

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United Nations Headquarters, New York

Gary Shapiro, CEA president and CEO

Thank you, Paul. It is an honor to be here and I applaud the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development for hosting a timely conference. This conference and the UN GAID mission come at a critical time. Many nations around the world stand at the crossroads between freedom and repression, between open and prosperous societies and closed and regressive economies. The choices they make and the path we take, will reverberate for years.

We want all nations and all people to embrace the path of access and freedom to use technology. I believe that technology plays a vital role in improving lives, advancing development and conveying the principles of peace which underlie the UN charter. The United Nations Charter directs this body to promote higher standards of living, solutions relating to international economic, social and health issues and universal respect for human rights. I believe that access to technology is a basic human right. Technology not only enhances the global economy, but it helps to free every individual to reach further, learn more, and have a more enriching life.

Today access to technology connects us to each other and to information, education and entertainment. Already we see the tremendous potential for ways in which technology monitors and aids our health, safety and environment. Later, it will be technology which responds, helps and thinks

logically and even creatively, to make us better as people, as citizens and as communities.

At the Consumer Electronics Association, we want to bring the wonders of technology to every corner of the world. If one thing unites our 2,200 corporate members, it is a passionate belief that the world's citizens are better off if they have access to the tools of the information age: the wireless phone, broadband network, or personal computer which ties them to the rest of the world.

Each January in Las Vegas, the consumer technology world gathers for the International CES. This trade show attracts 140,000 executives and leaders from around the world, along with 2,700 exhibitors who share ideas, introduce new products and witness first hand the changes in technology. Our challenge in this environment is to focus on how we can use great technology to make the world better, greener, safer, more educated and healthier. We believe that if every citizen of the world has access to technology our world will be better.

I humbly stand before you today because I believe passionately that technology solves so many of the world's problems. Technology provides access to information. It brings people closer. It creates new businesses. It spans oceans and time zones. It makes our world smaller and allows for an easier connection with other parts of the globe.

Think of the role technology has played in historical events. The telegraph was our first form of electronic communication covering distances quickly.

It informed us of the sinking of the Titanic. Radio and movie news clips in the early 20th Century provided information on global conflicts, and allowed people to see first-hand the events that were changing lives. At the same time, the telephone allowed us to stay in touch with each other, allowing one to one communication not only among our government leaders, but between everyday citizens. Where ships once took weeks to send diplomatic messages across oceans, modern communications means diplomatic crises can be resolved or avoided with the speed of a telephone call.

Many say the Berlin Wall collapsed thanks to the information revolution that began in the early- to mid-1980s. Before the wall fell with hammers and chisels, it weakened thanks to communication tools such as the television, telephone and fax machine.

Technology continues to bring people together today. Content sites such as YouTube allow anyone with access to the Internet to connect with people half a world away. They allow everyday citizens to be creators and storytellers. People around the world see short-videos conveying creativity, expression and freedom. Awareness of options and possibilities breeds hope. With hope come the seeds for a better world, as hope grows into desire and determination. And when desire blossoms into action, we see people improving their knowledge, their entrepreneurial spirit and their lives.

Initiatives, like the Secretary-General's 500x12 initiative, the One Laptop Per Child Project, AMD's 50x15 and other programs, are bringing computers and Internet access into the hands of children and citizens of developing regions. These tools provide a window to other parts of the

world. They expand minds, create opportunities, fuel education and spur innovation.

In a world where political and cultural differences sometimes build walls between societies, consumer technology products help to break down barriers. Cell phones allow people to stay connected. The Internet enables distance learning where students can connect with educational programs anywhere in the world. Advances in video conferencing enhance telemedicine and allow doctors in different countries and different time zones to consult in real time.

New technologies are changing lives. They create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses, increasing education and providing the tools necessary to innovate.

I believe that every person across the globe should have access to these tools. Technology should not be a privilege. Just as many countries recognize that their citizens have the basic human rights of life, liberty, equality and education – I believe the right to access and use technology will someday soon be recognized as a basic human right.

Technology bridges gaps in this increasingly divided world. It is blind to religion, blind to race, blind to gender and blind to national origin. Technology unites us. It brings stability. It leads to freedom and democracy. To innovation and economic growth. Technology is a powerful equalizer. Regardless of geography or economic status, all people can use technology to improve their lives.

But too often the technology products that fuel development are kept out of the countries whose people need them the most. All nations of the world need to embrace open and transparent trade policies as a means to ensure no one is left behind in our global digital economy. Economic growth in developing regions will simply not advance without free trade. In fact, open trade policies increase ICT exports to developing countries. These products enable governments to become more efficient, transparent and accountable.

Free trade also supports social responsibility. Our goal is to advance sustainable development, so we also must ensure that technology products are environmentally efficient and sustainable. Just last year, CEA launched the consumer site MyGreenElectronics.org, to educate consumers about responsible use, reuse and recycling of electronics, and to provide insight into the industry's energy and material conservation efforts. We must not shy away from promoting responsible measures that improve our environment.

Sustainable economic development is dependent upon access to technology. In January, the 2008 International CES hosted an inaugural program, "Technology and Emerging Countries," focused on technology's impact in long-term development of emerging markets. CES brings together the best and brightest minds in government and the consumer technology industry. And with 140,000 attendees from 140 countries, it was the perfect global platform to address these pressing issues, and make a difference in the developing world.

With speakers including His Excellency, Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, the program received tremendous attention, both at the show and in the media. Partnerships were made. Challenges were addressed, and solutions were discussed.

Companies are making great strides toward advancing development through technology solutions. And still much more needs to be done. The Technology and Emerging Countries Program was a major step toward bringing the public and private sectors together. And we will continue to use CES as a forum to keep these conversations flowing.

The United Nations is addressing these issues from a multilateral and multidisciplinary perspective. We are approaching from an industry perspective. By working together, we can all win. Growth in developing nations cannot occur without cooperation and an open dialogue between governments and technology companies, as well as marketplaces ready for business. We must work together to increase economic development.

The proposed UN GAID “New and Refurbished PCs” Initiative, which would collect 500,000 computers by 2012 for delivery to schools and community centers in emerging economies, is a perfect example of the collaboration between the public and private sectors. I think this proposal is absolutely phenomenal and have no doubt that it would be a tremendous success. And this afternoon, I would like to personally offer CEA’s assistance in promoting the program, whether through our website, our daily Smartbrief newsletter, which reaches 60,000 subscribers, our *Vision*

magazine, which has a circulation of more than 30,000, and the International CES which attracts 5,000 reporters.

We can make a difference with technology. Our society, and our global economy, have come far with the help of technologies that we use today – cell phones, satellites, the Internet, GPS. These technologies were once mere dreams. Now they are connecting people and marketplaces in ways we never dreamed possible.

And it's amazing to think of where we can go from here. Nanotechnology, sensing devices, biometrics and optoelectronics will combine with existing technologies, making products more user-friendly and energy efficient. They will make the world safer and smaller.

Technology is a vital means of connecting people, cultures and economies around the world that otherwise might not bridge together. I believe that people and nations that understand each other are less likely to go to war. I am proud to represent an industry whose main goal is to provide people with greater information and connectivity to other parts of the world.

I believe that people around the world are fundamentally the same. They want to be happy. They want to feel safe. They want to provide for their families.

Technology helps make that possible. It empowers every person to reach their potential and flourish.

That is why I believe every person should have access to technology. We have a responsibility to make that goal a reality.

I invite each of you to attend the 2009 International CES next January in Las Vegas to experience the new technologies that will change the way our world communicates, and the way people do business. And I personally encourage and invite each of you to attend the Technology and Emerging Countries Program at CES. We must work together to ensure that everyone has access to technology. It is simply the only way we will succeed. It is the only way we can ensure that all citizens can utilize the benefits that come from technology – access to greater health, education, prosperity and social freedom.

Thank you.