

Innovation for All

Commission on the Digital Economy

Meeting of the ICC Commission on the Digital Economy

Meeting on Monday 12 April 2021, 14:00-16:30 (CEST / UTC+2). Virtual meeting

SUMMARY RECORD

1. Opening session

The meeting was opened by **Carlos Lopez Blanco, Chair of the ICC Commission on the Digital Economy**. In his introductory remarks, Carlos stressed the truly extraordinary nature of the past year for policy issues linked to the digital economy in particular.

In this context, he reiterated the Commission's commitment to promoting four specific policy interventions that, if adopted, will further enable the deployment of digital technologies to build a more resilient global economy:

1. Governments must devise long-term strategies to bridge digital divides as greater connectivity is an essential precondition for a successful rebuild of the global economy. This can be achieved by boosting investment in digital infrastructure and promoting the development of STEM and digital skills across communities.
2. Governments and the business community must work together to develop a robust global framework on cybersecurity. The global nature of information networks and digitally-enabled services requires an unprecedented degree of international and multistakeholder cooperation if we are to leverage the empowering effects of digital technologies and successfully tackle their harmful use.
3. We must realize the full potential of data-driven economies to uncover new sources of innovation and growth that will help rebuild economies. Policymakers must recognize the importance of free flow of data across borders and the need to balance the broad use of data with high privacy, security and ethical standards.
4. Public policies that increase the global availability and movement of data will enable businesses and citizens to reap the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI). Policy makers, in close partnership with the private sector, must lead the way in the development and use of responsible, human-centric and trustworthy AI technologies.

He underlined that digital technologies will play a key role in rebuilding the global economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and in creating renewed economic opportunity for all. The ICC Commission on the Digital Economy, as the voice of the private sector, has a critical role to play in providing concrete recommendations to both policy makers and the global business community in the months and years to come. Carlos highlighted ICC's activities at the B20 as one of the main forums for immediate ICC engagement and invited members involved in or following the work of the B20 to work together for coordinated and most effective input.

➤ **FOR ACTION:**

Members were invited to contact the ICC Secretariat to sign up for the ICC B20 coordination group to inform ICC's position and coordinate engagement.

Following Carlos' introductory remarks, **Andrew Wilson, ICC Global Policy Director and Permanent Observer to the UN**, gave a presentation on the vision for ICC's policy work

and for the governance of ICC commissions. In his remarks, Andrew stressed that ICC commissions are essential for channelling expertise and interest from ICC member companies, and central to ICC's policy work. By bringing together businesses of all sizes, operating in different sectors and regions, ICC commissions have the unique ability to drive compelling policy advocacy, along with the promotion of best practices aimed at businesses and policymakers alike. This is particularly true for the ICC Commission on the Digital Economy. Our voice is essential as the new economic environment increasingly exacerbates entrenched challenges such as scattered infrastructure quality and unequal access to meaningful and secure connectivity, and surfaces new policy challenges like the fragmentation of the Internet and protectionist policies hiding under the veil of data protection.

The three new thematic Working Groups launched by the Commission (on Access & Connectivity, Data Governance and Cybersecurity) will help address these important developments and enable us to maximize our collective impact where it matters. These Working Groups provide an open, diverse and flexible forum for interested members and National Committees to leverage their expertise to develop policy positions, design advocacy strategies and build capacity in the context of global debates on the future of the digital economy.

Andrew also shared ICC's plan of action agreed by ICC's Leadership and Executive Board, based on conversations with our broader network.

He noted how, to deliver on this ambitious strategic plan, ICC is working on improving our internal processes and governance. We will re-energize ICC Commissions as leading global peer groups to enable knowledge sharing and the development of impactful policy content in areas where ICC can add most value. This means: (1) Clarifying Commission governance and processes, including the mandates of the Commission leadership teams with updated ToRs; (2) Enhancing member engagement through reinforced and targeted outreach to ensure balanced geographic and sectoral representation and by streamlining our member onboarding process. The Commission's regional ambassadors will play a significant role in this process; (3) Enabling high-quality service delivery, through maximization of ICC's brand and unique institutional relationships, greater flexibility in the designation of ICC resources and effective partnerships with national committees and other key stakeholders; and (4) Delivering a comprehensive ICC-wide value proposition, looking at digitalization as a cross-cutting theme and developing joined-up strategic roadmaps on key global issues.

2. Roundtable Discussion on Connectivity and access to ICTs in Africa

Hossam Elgamal, ICC Commission on the Digital Economy Regional Ambassador to Africa, moderated a panel discussion entitled *Connectivity and access to ICTs in Africa: creating an enabling environment to expand meaningful access to digital technologies*. The discussion, featuring **Jean-Paul Adam, Director Technology UN Economic Commission Africa**, **Thabo Mashegoane, Chairman AfICTA** and **Lacina Kone, Director General Smart Africa**, aimed to equip participants with a better understanding of how the private and public sector can work together to create an enabling environment that fosters connectivity and expands access to digital technologies.

While Internet penetration is relatively low in Africa and local disparities remain pervasive,

the region has seen a high rate of growth in connectivity between 2005 (3% Internet penetration) and 2019 (28% penetration). This has created new economic opportunities and spurred the mobile revolution with around 80% of the population of Africa now using mobile devices. However, much needs to be done to achieve universal connectivity and ensure that businesses and communities can truly leverage the empowering effects of ICTs in a meaningful way.

Panelists agreed that a paradigm shift is necessary at a national level to put ICTs at the centre of social economic development in Africa. In order to seize the promises of the 4th industrial revolution and to transition to a knowledge-based economy, national governments must put connectivity and access to digital technologies at the top of their agenda. The private sector can work alongside regional organizations and civil society to promote public sector investment in ICTs by highlighting the positive knock-on effects and the catalysing power of connectivity for economies and communities.

While greater public sector investment is necessary to address the infrastructure needs in Africa, the high cost of credit and the impact of COVID-19 on national budgets means that new frameworks need to be designed to facilitate private sector investment. In this context, one of the flagship projects of the UN ECA is a liquidity and sustainability facility which can help de-risk and foster private sector investment. The facility is designed to support emerging markets sovereigns in advancing sustainable development initiatives and, more immediately, facilitate access to liquidity, lending, and investment into African countries.

Speakers noted how different regional and national regulations create barriers that hinder cross-border e-commerce and investment in digital markets. They called for greater cooperation and regulatory harmonization to create a regional digital market that would foster investor confidence, promote innovation and economic diversification, increase confidence in the use of e-commerce and boost a market of more than 1.2 billion people, while opening opportunities for businesses and particularly for small and medium enterprises.

Building on this panel discussion, the Commission on the Digital Economy aims to continue to increase its reach in Africa and in regions that have remained peripheral to date. Hossam and the Commission's other Regional Ambassadors will act as key liaisons to help identify opportunities for the Commission in target regions.

3. Presentation of the joint ICC-Oxford Report on AI Ethics for Business

Felipe Thomaz, Associate Professor of Marketing, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford and **Natalia Efremova, Research Fellow, University of Oxford**, walked members through the latest draft of the ICC Report on AI Ethics for Business. Building on this discussion and subsequent input by members,

The objective of the report is to provide the private sector with concrete guidelines for the implementation of ethical AI technologies and position the ICC Commission on the Digital Economy as a key stakeholder in the current debates on the ethical use of AI as many international organisations and governments are currently moving to implementation of existing principles. The Commission aims to build on this initial report and continue to

advocate for trustworthy, globally compatible and market-driven policies that can help unlock the societal and economic benefits of artificial intelligence.

➤ **FOR ACTION:**

Members were invited to share with the ICC Secretariat by 30 April their feedback and written comments on the substance, orientation and utility of the report. The ICC Secretariat will consolidate comments to ensure that the report reflects the breadth of views and depth of expertise of the network, and reflects industry best practices and needs and will determine appropriate next steps.

4. Update on the thematic Working Groups of the Commission

(1) ICC Working Group on Access & Connectivity

Christoph Steck, Director Public Policy & Internet, Telefonica and **Chris Wilson, Senior Manager Public Affairs, Amazon** provided an update on the priorities of the Working Group on Access and Connectivity. The group currently brings together 45 members from 20 countries.

- a. ICC White Paper on Delivering Universal Meaningful Connectivity
Building on the recent publication of a [Joint Statement on Connectivity](#) endorsed by ICC that calls for the international community to work together on closing the digital divide through a people-centred approach, the Working Group will focus its efforts on a White Paper on Delivering Universal Meaningful Connectivity. The paper aims to underscore the leading role of the private sector and reinforce our message for sustained national and regional support to ensure enabling policy environments for continued innovation and investment in delivering broad and effective connectivity. A dedicated scoping group has been formed to produce an initial draft of the White Paper that will be shared with members of the Commission for further input in due course. The paper is aimed for publication in September 2021.
- b. ITU Task Force
Several members of the Working Group have come together to set up a dedicated Task Force to address policy discussions at the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The overarching objective of the Task Force is to build a global business movement to monitor, shape and respond to policy discussions in the lead up and during the ITU's main policy-setting meetings: the World Telecom Development Conference (November 2021 - TBC) , World Telecom Policy Forum (December 2021), World Telecom Standardization Assembly (March 2022), ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (September 2022).

(2) ICC Working Group on Data Governance

Carolyn Nguyen, Director Technology Policy, Microsoft and **Jakob Greiner, Head of EU Regulatory Affairs, DT** provided an update on the priorities of the Working Group on Data Governance. The group currently brings together 50 members from 20 countries.

- a. ICC White Paper on Government Access to Personal Data Held by the Private Sector
The objective of this White Paper initiated by the Working Group is to gather and

advocate global business views on government access to personal data held by the private sector to inform policymakers and key opinion formers. The paper will (1) raise awareness on the diversity of business and the variety / level of personal data held by business as well as of the different scenarios of government access, especially when coupled with cross-border data flows, (2) detail the potential impact of unchecked government access, and (3) provide a set of recommendations. A dedicated scoping group has been formed to produce an initial draft that will be shared with members of the Commission for further input in due course. The paper is aimed for publication in November 2021.

b. Joint business statement to the OECD Committee on Digital Economy Policy (CDEP)

In parallel, the co-leads of the Working Group have been working closely with the ICC Secretariat and in collaboration with Business at OECD (BIAC) to deliver a joint business statement to the OECD Committee on Digital Economy Policy (CDEP) on the ongoing OECD work to develop an instrument setting out high-level principles or policy guidance for trusted government access to personal data held by the private sector. The result of the cooperation (i.e. a joint business statement) will likely be submitted to CDEP at their next meeting on 6 May. Alongside ICC and BIAC, we also aim to secure the endorsement of other global and regional business associations and industry groups.

(3) ICC Working Group on Cybersecurity

a. ICC Policy Primer on Cybersecurity

The ICC Policy Primer on Cybersecurity outlines the main challenges cyberthreats pose to our economies and societies in general and business in particular. Reflecting on these challenges, the paper sets out key public policy areas that require urgent and thorough consideration by both the private and public sector. It also notes ICC's guiding principles on cybersecurity policy, that inform our positions so far. Having been reviewed by Commission members and National Committees, this paper will be submitted in May to the ICC Executive Board for adoption at their upcoming meeting in the beginning of June.

b. Issues Briefs and call for urgent action

Building on Policy Primer, the members of the Working Group on Cybersecurity collectively agreed on the urgent need for action to make practical and immediate progress on the ground. The group agreed to convey this sense of urgency and need for action through an Issues Brief that will put in perspective the destructive effects of cyber threats, highlight their true cost to the economy and compel policy makers to act on existing commitments. Additional thematic Issues Briefs have been agreed by the group and will be developed in sequence in due course. Ultimately these briefs will provide guidance on how to best update the ICC Cybersecurity Guide for Business.

➤ **FOR ACTION:**

Members were invited to contact the ICC Secretariat to sign up for any of the working groups to contribute to the work streams of their interest.