As the institutional representative of 45 million businesses in over 100 countries, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) considers Internet governance to be critical for the promotion of international trade, economic development and innovation.

In today’s digital economy, Internet governance has implications for businesses operating all over the world, regardless of location, sector, or company size. The importance of this agenda cannot be understated in the context of COVID-19, especially as economies worldwide are working towards a sustainable economic rebuild.

The Internet and digital technologies are a vital component of this recovery. This is why global leaders from all stakeholder groups must work collectively to ensure that actions are coherent with existing commitments to:

- promote a globally connected, stable, unfragmented Internet. Keep it whole!
- expand connectivity and ensure meaningful access for everyone. Keep it open!
- enable data free flows with trust to support a truly global digital economy. Keep it flowing!
- increase efforts to strengthen cybersecurity. Keep it safe!
- preserve the multistakeholder model for Internet governance. Keep it ours!

ICC and its Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) initiative, works to ensure private sector views are represented at the Internet Governance Forum and all other forums where the future of the Internet is under consideration.

This guide concisely sets out business views on the key issues up for discussion at IGF 2021. To learn more about our work visit [www.iccwbo.org](http://www.iccwbo.org) or join the discussion at [@iccwbo](https://twitter.com/iccwbo).

We are looking forward to working with you!
KEEP IT OPEN!

Private sector investment and innovation has transformed the Internet from an information exchange network to the platform for sustainable social and economic development we recognise it to be today. In order to reach their development potential, ICT must be accessible, affordable, and relevant to the needs of all citizens. Connecting the unconnected is not just about infrastructure and access to mobile, the Internet and new technologies. Meaningful connectivity also requires focus on adoption barriers, including creating an enabling environment for the creation and availability of locally relevant content in local languages and addressing skills gaps.

In pursuit of these goals and of a people-centric Information Society, policymakers must improve their understanding of how ICTs work in practice, including knowledge of the ICT ecosystem, the roles of the various stakeholders and relevant policy issues. Frameworks that enable Internet connectivity should be based on light-touch ICT policy and regulations, encourage competition and the entry of new players into the ICT ecosystem to foster the emergence of innovative products, services and business models.

Multistakeholder efforts are necessary for the continued support of capacity building initiatives that empower individuals and businesses locally as content producers. Multistakeholder efforts are also needed to develop business models that are unique and relevant to national economies. To enhance inclusiveness and diversity online, attention should be given to developing tools that promote Internet access and use to a wider spectrum of users including women, the elderly, people living with disabilities, and speakers of all languages.

KEEP IT WHOLE!

An open, stable and trusted Internet is vital for business operations worldwide and a prerequisite to the effective functioning of public services such as education, health care or various government services. Sectors as wide-ranging as manufacturing, agriculture, logistics, and finance rely in varying degrees on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital technologies (DTs).

ICC and its members share in the core belief that ICTs and DTs, when properly harnessed, are a formidable engine of innovation, competitiveness and sustainable economic growth, as well as instruments of social and economic empowerment for all. This unique potential can only be fully harnessed if the fundamental nature of the Internet as an open, interconnected and interoperable network of networks is preserved.

Technical, legislative and policy developments—such as bans or restrictions on international data flows; techno-protectionist initiatives, interference with free expression, privacy, and/or encryption; and Internet shutdowns; among others—heighten the risk that the Internet fragments into siloed parts. These risks threaten the open, interconnected and interoperable nature of the Internet, along with its associated benefits to social and economic development, while also harming human rights.

FIND OUT MORE

ICC BASIS supports the principles for an open, interconnected and interoperable internet set out by this multistakeholder statement.
Data is a key driver of economic and social development in both developed and developing countries. The Internet and internet-enabled services, which rely on open cross-border data flows are vital for companies across all sectors of the economy and are particularly critical for small and medium sized businesses.

However, there is an increasing lack of trust, or confidence, due to concerns that policy objectives—such as privacy, security, consumer and human rights protection, access to data or even industrial competitiveness—would be compromised when data moves abroad. Failure to address this erosion of trust risks impeding data flows. Such lack of trust can also serve as the rationale for an increasing number of compelled data localisation measures globally. Together these measures will lead to increasingly fragmented national approaches to data governance and a growing number of restrictions that prohibit or significantly encumber cross-border data flows, and significantly curb the economic and societal benefits they enable.

ICC urges governments to ensure that all citizens and companies can realise the full potential of the Internet by adopting policies that facilitate the adoption of new technologies and the global movement of data that supports them. Policymakers should support open crossborder data flows, while also ensuring that users have adequate privacy, security, and IP protections and that those protections are implemented in a manner that is transparent, non-discriminatory and not a disguised restriction on trade.

The lack of a consistent and harmonized approach towards government access to personal data and the resulting inconsistencies in law enforcement continue to create significant administrative burdens on businesses, as they contribute to an erosion of trust in the use of digital technology, holding back the potential of the digital economy. Trust is strengthened when governments instead adopt robust and comprehensive commitments to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, including the fundamental right to privacy, when personal data are subject to government access.

In addition, cooperation between governments and stakeholders including business and multilateral organizations are needed to advocate for interoperable policy frameworks that would facilitate cross-border data flows, enabling data to be exchanged and used in a trusted manner, thereby aiming for high privacy standards.

FIND OUT MORE
Read the [ICC policy primer on Trade in the Digital Economy](#) developed to assist policymakers in addressing the negative implications for growth from restrictions to data flows.

ICC supports the work of the OECD to define high-level principles and safeguards for government access to personal data held by the private sector, as underlined in this joint letter by a coalition of global business associations convened by ICC and Business at OECD.
**KEEP IT OURS!**

The very nature of the global Internet necessitates an effective multistakeholder governance model to be at its core. To this end, business looks forward to contributing to the possible evolution of the Internet Governance Forum—and, specifically, to ensuring that this important mechanism is strengthened, agile and capable of supporting an inclusive and interdependent digital world. Effective multistakeholder Internet governance includes continued efforts by all stakeholders (individually and collectively—including private sector led, multistakeholder and intergovernmental) to address Internet-related issues and the promotion of greater cooperation among organisations. Such cooperation should be guided by the objectives of information sharing, raising awareness and where appropriate, coherence among work programmes and collaboration.

The IGF offers a unique, open and inclusive setting for multistakeholder dialogue around

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**KEEP IT SAFE!**

Today, cyberthreats impact all businesses regardless of size or industry or geographical location, threatening to thwart the potential economic impact of ICT and digital technologies, as consumer and business express heightened concerns over cybersecurity. The borderless nature of the Internet, the digital economy, increased cyber-physical interdependency through IoT, and cybercrime paints a complex legal and operational picture for cybersecurity. Neither businesses nor governments can combat these borderless threats on their own. As businesses and regulators both seek to find meaningful ways to mitigate cybersecurity concerns, collaboration is crucial.

Tangible outcomes and concrete indicators that objectively reflect responsible state behaviour in cyber-space are needed. Stakeholder cooperation is essential for strengthening Internet security and responding to the large and growing range of cybersecurity threats to the global Internet. Stakeholder collaboration is important to promote a culture of security and to build trust among businesses and users with appropriate legislation in place to combat cybercrime. The private sector is best placed to inform policymakers of the uses and desired effects of such measures as well as to point out potential barriers that might impact their implementation.

Rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in accordance with the rule of law and international human rights legal obligations. Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information in a safe environment is essential to protect the Internet’s ability to generate innovation and commercial opportunities for all.

**FIND OUT MORE**

Read the ICC Policy Primer on Cybersecurity that highlights key issues and challenges that business and society face in strengthening Internet security and responding to the large and growing range of cybersecurity threats.

See the ICC Call for Government Action on Cybersecurity, detailing urgent and concrete actions needed on the national and international fronts to curb the ever-rising trend of cyber threats.

Consult the ICC Cybersecurity Guide for Business aimed at helping companies of all sizes manage their approach to cybersecurity and mitigate threats posed by cybercrime.

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issues, norms, principles, and decision-making processes related to the use and evolution of the Internet.

FIND OUT MORE

ICC BASIS is a hub of multinational enterprises, SMEs and associations from around the world and across sectors that work actively and collectively to foster business engagement on Internet governance policy issues. If you are interested in joining us or working with us, please get in touch!

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (ICC)

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the institutional representative of more than 45 million companies in over 100 countries. ICC’s core mission is to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. Through a unique mix of advocacy, solutions and standard setting, we promote international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation, in addition to providing market-leading dispute resolution services. Our members include many of the world’s leading companies, SMEs, business associations and local chambers of commerce.

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