

14 April 2016

Dear Secretary Kerry, Honored and Distinguished Guests:

For many around the world, social and economic opportunities increasingly depend on the ability to access the Internet. Although 3.2 billion people now have access, 60 percent of the world's population remains disconnected, with the majority living in the developing world. As a result, the socio-economic gulf between those with and without Internet access is widening.

The convening of finance ministers this week to discuss the power of the Internet is not only new, it has the unique potential to bridge that expanding socio-economic gap. Connectivity has become an economic imperative, essential to helping governments overcome challenges impeding development and empower their citizens to fully participate in the global digital economy. Accordingly, we strongly support the Global Connect Initiative (GCI), launched by the United States last year in cooperation with other nations and organizations.

The GCI highlights the importance of connectivity as an integral part of national development strategies. As noted by the UN General Assembly's ten-year review of the World Summit on Information Society, the World Bank's report on Digital Dividends, and similar studies, truly inspiring progress is being achieved around the globe. However, tremendous untapped potential remains for digital technologies to drive economic growth, innovation and improved living standards. By helping to build broader awareness of the socio-economic benefits that can be realized through Internet connectivity, the GCI can assist governments and other organizations around the world in achieving sustainable development through the adoption of policies and programs that promote innovation and investment in broadband infrastructure and complementary skills. We recommend that such initiatives focus on:

- Increasing investment in high speed broadband networks and advancing innovative industry-driven solutions to extend connectivity
- Enabling and promoting the development of locally relevant content, applications and services, and
- Identifying the policies and strategies that focus not only on spurring connectivity, but also entrepreneurship, cross-border information flows, governance, rule of law, and open and competitive marketplaces.

The effective use of the Internet and digital technologies can promote national growth, competitiveness, innovation and higher living standards, particularly in the developing world. Through public-private commitments inspired by the GCI and similar initiatives, we anticipate a rapid expansion of effective utilization of information technology throughout the world.

The information and communications technology industry, along with companies that rely on the Internet to invest and grow new markets, are committed to partnering with governments, international organizations, industry, civil society and other thought leaders around the world to help expand Internet access. We commend the many governments and organizations that support the Global Connect Initiative, and invite others to make similar commitments, including allocating funding, to help us connect the next 1.5 billion people by 2020.

Sincerely,

**Information Technology Industry Council**

**Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association**

**DIGITALEUROPE**

**Communications and Information Network Association of Japan**

**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

**American Tower Corporation**

**Brocade**

**Corning Incorporated**

**Dell**

**Ericsson**

**Facebook**

**Google**

**Intel**

**Microsoft Corporation**

**Nokia**

**Qualcomm**

**The New England Council**

**Business Council for International Understanding**