

**Article by Ambassador Terry Kramer, head of the delegation of United States to the World, Conference on international telecommunications (WCIT)**

The United States supports continued growth of the international telecom and internet sectors to the benefit of consumers, citizens and societies around the world. This year, in early December, the nations of the world is gathering in Dubai to discuss cooperative means of ensuring such growth, including guaranteeing the free flow of opinion and ideas in those sectors. The World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) will meet for the first time since 1988 to consider the rapid and dramatic evolution in global communication in the intervening years.

Much has occurred since 1988. Back then, there was no internet, and cellular communication was in its infancy. Today, there are more than two billion internet users spanning the globe, and more than 6 billion mobile telephone subscriptions. What's more, the most rapid growth in both categories is occurring in the developing world. The annual growth rate in the number of internet users in Africa in recent years, for example, has topped 33%, and mobile broadband services grew by 78% last year in developing countries, nearly twice the rate as in developed countries.

In Cuba, while citizens have expanded their use of mobile phones to increase contact across the country and with the outside world, the Cuban government continues to tightly control the use of telecommunications, including the Internet. Most Cubans do not have access to computers and are denied access to the global network of information that would provide learning opportunities and help them develop their country. Millions of people in Cuba could have access to the Internet if it were not for the restrictive policies of the Cuban government. Cuba is free to negotiate contracts with Internet service providers and those providers that fall under U.S. jurisdiction are covered by an OFAC general license to provide Internet services to Cuba. When the Cuban government allows its people to join the rest of the world through access to the global Internet, they will be able to realize the benefits of economic growth and innovation that are stimulated through international telecommunications.

Why have these industries enjoyed such rapid growth and innovation, and brought with them remarkable social and economic benefits to consumers, citizens and societies? Simple – they are consumer-driven, participatory, decentralized, and managed by multiple stakeholders. This is a model of success, past and future, that will continue to yield dramatic growth of broadband infrastructure and access to the internet. The nations of the world should endorse this model in Dubai in December.

Endorsement of the multi-stakeholder model is the best path to satisfying the growing worldwide desire for more investment in broadband infrastructure, particularly in developing countries. The United States also appreciates the concerns of some nations regarding the integrity of networks in an era of hackers, malware and malignant content. With these concerns and others in mind, the United States is proposing adjustments to the existing International Telecommunications Regulations that would further promote the international telecommunications market as a

liberalized, pro-consumer and competitive engine for growth – and not just in the U.S., but around the world.

In addition, the United States shares the belief of many governments around the world that growth and investment in the international telecommunications market will be driven in the future by consumer demand, and that commercially-negotiated arrangements to exchange international telecommunications traffic are the best means of responding to such demand with innovative products and services. We believe governments should create and sustain environments conducive to investment and growth of broadband infrastructure with liberalized access. We believe that International Telecommunications Regulations are *not* an effective tool to address security issues, including those that relate to cybercrime, national security or national defense.

And, we are firmly dedicated to a vision of international telecommunications and the internet that promotes and facilitates freedom of expression. Proposals to control content transmitted over networks are not only outside the scope of the Telecommunications Regulations, but could suffocate what should be a vibrant and open telecommunications and internet society.

The United States will approach this Conference with the goal of advancing the shared global interest in extending the benefits of international telecommunications and the internet to the largest possible number of consumers, citizens and societies. We believe we are on that very path, and with continued partnership with all the engaged stakeholders, that goal will grow nearer every day.