

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
OF THE U.S. FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
TO THE STUDENTS OF
PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY
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Thank you for the kind invitation to join you in this conversation today. I am so pleased to be at this renowned university that brings together so many young scholars from so many nations, and I very much welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the role that the Internet and access to it will play as our nations move forward into the Twenty-first century. As a former college professor, I always eagerly welcome the opportunity to talk with students—the future leaders of academia, industry and government.

I have always been a true believer in the importance of the U.S.-Russia relationship. As part of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission in the 1990s, I made the journey between Washington and Moscow many times—I believe this is my 17th visit—working to forge stronger commercial and trade ties between the United States and Russia. I am encouraged that, under the leadership of President Medvedev and President Obama, we are setting our bilateral relationship on a more constructive course.

When I first started visiting Russia in the 1990s, my task was to encourage discussions across a broad range of industry sectors, including energy, chemicals, agribusiness, construction, aviation—the list goes on. Now my focus is much more on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). I bring this up not to explain my two different jobs, but because it reflects how our world has changed. Just as ICT has come front-and-center in my work, so is it coming to the fore of our countries' bilateral dialogue. And those who work for progress in *all* business sectors are awakening to the realization that progress in each of them hinges importantly on adopting the telecommunications technologies of the Twenty-first century. We are moving to a digital world now—very quickly—and the broadband that drives this transition has become what I call the “Great Enabler” of our time. When we have high-speed, affordable broadband available to all of our citizens and our business enterprises, it will be much easier to make progress on the many challenges that confront both Russia and the United States. These new information technologies must never be seen as the province of technophiles or those preoccupied with gadgetry. No, these are the tools for all of us to unlock progress across the whole array of challenges facing us—better use of energy, halting climate degradation, providing healthcare to all our citizens, educating our young (and our old, too), helping the disabled realize their potential and opening the doors of economic and social opportunity for all. Each and every one of these challenges has a broadband component as part of its solution. So this broadband we speak of today is wrapped up in just about everything we do.

You will hear Ambassador Verveer, Secretary Strickling and me speak this morning about the power of the Internet and the need to ensure continued freedom and

innovation in our digital space. As I frequently remind people back in Washington, the Internet was born on openness, thrived on openness and will depend on openness if it is to realize its full potential. Users need to be free to go to any legal content of their choice, using the applications and devices they choose, so long as they don't harm the network. The Internet must never be about powerful gatekeepers and walled gardens. It must always be about the smoothest possible flow of communications among people. That is its great transformative promise, and falling short of fulfilling it would be to betray the promise of the technology and, worse, to neglect a historic opportunity.

Despite this potential, I watched for much of the last decade as consumers and businesses in my own country had to pay too much for broadband service that was very often too slow—and too often, in too many places, there was no access to it at all. Now, thanks to the vision of President Obama and the U.S. Congress, we are finally doing something about it. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 instructed the Federal Communications Commission, where I work, to develop a national broadband strategy for my country.

After a lengthy, open and very public process, the National Broadband Plan was prepared and then delivered to our Congress two months ago—and we are already hard at work to implement its recommendations, some of them immediate and others longer term. So, now we have a plan to address what I believe to be the central infrastructure challenge of our time.

And that is how I think we should look at this. New as the technology is, the challenge of building infrastructure is as old as our nations are old. You know, if we course back through the annals of history, we will find that just about every major era had its own infrastructure challenge. In the case of the United States, in our very early days (which weren't nearly as early as Russia's early days!), as settlers streamed westward, the challenge was to get the produce and products they made to markets back East. For that to happen, we needed roads and turnpikes and bridges and canals; we needed ports and harbor improvements. And we found ways, enterprise and government working together, to get the job done. Then, as we became a vast continental and industrial power, the need was to lay a railway grid across the country, climaxed by the great saga of the transcontinental railroads. We did that, too. Later we found ways to get electricity out across the land. Closer to our time, beginning in the 1950s, came the U.S. Interstate Highway System. Even in telecom, we found ways to bring basic telephone service to most of our citizens. Your country had its own, often very similar, infrastructure challenges.

Here is my point: in all great infrastructure build-outs, there is a critical role for the both industry and government to play. The full reach of our broadband goals will only be realized through the leadership, work and investment of the private sector and the innovation it brings. It remains the world's great economic locomotive. But, like those other great infrastructure build-outs I mentioned, private sector know-how, energy and innovation work best when harnessed to visionary public policy. Private enterprise will lead the way, but it falls upon policy makers to play a formative role in charting the

direction and to ensure a legal and regulatory environment that provides certainty for investment, fosters competition and safeguards consumers. We should see this, in my country as well as yours, not as private sector *versus* public sector, but as private sector *and* public sector, pulling together for the common good.

The synergies between government and the private sector go beyond the establishment of a policy framework. The two sectors can work together to encourage innovation and development, including an emphasis on basic research—and this is an area where universities like this one can contribute so much. Another government role can be to encourage anchor tenants for unserved and underserved communities, so there is a school or a library or a post office where people can go for a high-speed connection. This is a good path for stimulating broadband build-out to communities where the technology hasn't yet penetrated every individual's home. Government can help bring broadband to those areas where there is no business case for companies to invest. In my country, we are going to reconfigure our Universal Service Fund so that it can support broadband in unserved areas. And, of course, government can bring its own services and data and information to its citizens online, making government more efficient and saving the people time, effort and money. This is an emphasis on the part of both our countries.

Here is another element in meeting the challenge of getting broadband deployed: greater cooperation among the ministries and agencies of our governments. If high speed broadband and energy are intertwined, as surely they are, then our energy departments and ministries should be involved in the day-to-day implementation of our respective broadband plans. Other examples: if we want all of our low-income and subsidized housing to be wired for the Twenty-first century as it is built, saving the wasteful costs of coming in later and tearing the building apart to make way for broadband, our housing and urban development departments and ministries should be involved at the outset. If we want smart transportation grids, the transportation departments and ministries should be working seamlessly together. The same goes for education, environment, healthcare, civil rights, and so on.

Our target is to ensure that value-laden, high-speed broadband reaches “all people of the United States.” And I always emphasize that word “all” because it must mean that everyone—no matter who they are, where they live, or the particular circumstances of their individual lives—has access to these transformative, opportunity-creating technology tools. Rich or poor, farmer or city-dweller, big business or small, young or old, able-bodied or living with a disability—it makes no difference. *Every* citizen must have access to this enabling technology in order to participate fully in Twenty-first century life. Access denied is opportunity denied. No country on this increasingly-connected planet can afford to have digital divides between haves and have-nots.

To fully realize the goal of broadband for all, broadband must not only be ubiquitously deployed, accessible and affordable; people must also know how to use it. Literacy has always been important to an individual's success in society, and—in our digital age—digital literacy is no different. People need training and education to understand the Internet. I believe this should be required learning for kids in primary and

secondary schools. Our kids, my grandkids, need to understand the online world in which they live. They need the tools to know how to navigate the information available online, how to discern truth from fiction, and opinion from cold, hard facts. And they need to know not just how to use online media, but how these new media forms can use—or misuse—them. We've learned many times in history that technology is not always synonymous with progress. It's what we do with technology that counts. Our Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, put it very well in her excellent speech on Internet Freedom a few months ago. This is what she said: "On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress.... And we recognize that the world's information infrastructure will become what we and others make of it."

As our two countries continue to strengthen their ties, I am optimistic that together we will gain a greater understanding of the enabling power of the Internet and how to maximize its benefits for all of our citizens. The United States may have already launched a broadband plan, but nothing about innovation is static. We need to learn from our successes and our failures as we move forward. We need to learn from the perspectives and experiences of our Russian counterparts. That's one big reason why we are in Russia this week. And we need to learn from our future leaders—students such as yourselves—and that is why we come here this morning.

Thank you for your attention and your hospitality, and now it's time to hear from you!