

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission**

**“Connect a School, Connect a Community”**

**Ministerial Roundtable  
World Telecommunications Development Conference  
International Telecommunications Union  
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It's a pleasure to share the podium with Minister Sachin Pilot -- and thank you for the warm welcome India has given the American delegation and all members of the ITU.

And congratulations to the ITU leadership -- Secretary General Toure and Director Al-Basheer -- for the launch of the Connect a School, Connect a Community Initiative to promote broadband connectivity for schools in developing nations. I'd also like to acknowledge the hard and excellent work of Susan Schorr in making this initiative possible.

Let me share some of our experiences in the United States on these topics, first communities, then schools -- topics of central concern as we developed our recently released National Broadband Plan.

The Plan was the product of a process focused on openness, transparency, and broad participation. The FCC held over 50 public workshops and hearings with over 2,500 participants offline and online. We received tens of thousands of pages of public written comments, and had extensive meetings and discussions with a wide array of stakeholders, including many of our friends in other countries who are addressing similar issues in innovative ways.

Our work on the Plan confirms the central premise underlying the UN's Millennium Development Goals -- that broadband is indispensable infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Broadband is a platform for economic opportunity. Studies from MIT, the World Bank and other institutions tell us the same thing -- even modest increases in broadband adoption spurs economic growth and creates jobs.

Broadband is a platform for citizen engagement -- enabling the exchange of ideas and information, and empowering individuals to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

And broadband is a platform for solutions to many of the major challenges that face all nations: such as health care, energy, and education.

Those are the opportunities. Our work on our National Broadband Plan also revealed challenges familiar to many here.

These include deployment challenges, particularly to areas of sparse population; and broadband adoption challenges, particularly among those with lower incomes.

We also identified challenges involving potential shortages of spectrum -- we see demand for mobile broadband spectrum increasing much more rapidly than supply.

And we identified challenges in underutilization of broadband by both the government and the private sector in helping address societal challenges like health care, clean energy, and education.

As the first step in tackling these challenges and seizing the opportunities of broadband, our Plan sets out a series of goals for the U.S.

- Affordable 100 megabit broadband service to 100 million households by 2020.
- At least 1 gigabit service to at least one anchor institution, like a school or library, in every community in the U.S.
- From 65% to 90% broadband adoption by 2020, with an ultimate goal of 100%, and
- All our children having the digital skills required to participate in our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and society.

Those are the major goals, and our Plan makes a series of recommendations to help achieve these goals, including:

- Transforming our Universal Service Fund from supporting yesterday's telephone service to tomorrow's broadband service, and doing it in a way to ensure that universal service is truly universal -- bringing broadband access to all communities, including rural, indigenous, and low-income people.
- Recovering and unleashing licensed and unlicensed spectrum to promote wireless broadband -- with a target of making an additional 500 MHz of spectrum available for wireless broadband within the next ten years.
- Promoting a climate for robust private investment in wired and wireless broadband infrastructure by, for example, removing regulatory barriers around tower-siting and rights of way.
- Fostering competition; empowering consumers; and preserving the freedom to innovate and communications on an open Internet.

The Plan also includes a set of recommendations on how broadband can be better utilized to help solve national challenges. One key aspect of what we call the national purposes portion of our plan is to use broadband to drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of government

services -- accelerating the shift to e-government to provide better services at lower cost, and less impact on our environment.

Another key aspect of what our Plan calls national purposes is using broadband to improve education.

It is hard to identify anything more important than education for our children, and no technological innovation in our lifetime has greater potential to transform education than broadband Internet.

With broadband, any school library can become a portal to more information than the proverbial library at Alexandria, Egypt.

Children living in the poorest and most isolated communities in the world can have access in their classrooms to the best teachers in the world.

Up-to-date e-textbooks can replace outdated versions that might well have been written before broadband existed.

The expression that the Internet opens up new worlds of discovery is not just a metaphor. In West Virginia, a rural, lower-income part of the United States, a 15-year-old student recently discovered a rare type of star using data from a national observatory. She was able to do so only because her school had a broadband connection.

In the U.S., we've been working since the 1990s to harness the opportunities of the Internet for education.

In 1996, the U.S. Congress created and the FCC implemented what we call our E-Rate program. How does it work?

E-Rate provides discounts for schools and libraries to obtain affordable Internet access. It was created as an expansion of our pre-existing universal service program for phone service, relying on the funding mechanism of that program.

E-Rate's goal was to make sure not only that schools were connected, but that we had connections in our classrooms.

The program has been one of our most successful.

The year E-Rate was established, 14% of U.S. classrooms were connected to the Internet. Within 3 years of E-Rate's creation, 63% of classrooms were connected. Today, 95% of classrooms have connections, and virtually all schools are connected.

E-Rate is a good example of what can happen when there is a plan – which is one of the reasons I applaud the Connect a School, Connect a Community Initiative.

While the E-Rate program has been a success measured against its original objectives, our National Broadband Plan found that schools and teachers today have new challenges around high-speed Internet access – which requires new steps to update our E-Rate program and other policies.

To seize the opportunities of broadband for education, our Plan makes several recommendations:

First, ensure that there is a predictable, reliable funding mechanism. Schools and teachers need to know that they will have ongoing access to resources in order to commit to using Internet-based applications in their lesson plans.

Second, expand the focus from schools and classrooms to students and teachers. By this I mean moving to supporting students *as they learn* and teachers *as they teach*. Education does not stop at the schoolyard gate, and so support of broadband for education shouldn't stop there either. For example, many students have long commutes to school. One U.S. school put Wi-Fi on a high school bus, instantly transforming it into a rolling study hall.

Third, recognize that facilities and infrastructure alone are not enough to seize the opportunities of broadband for education. This means supporting the creation of educational content, and also establishing policies to facilitate the use of privately created content in schools.

It also means supporting digital training for teachers. Digital literacy is one of the major general challenges for broadband adoption; it is no surprise that we must tackle the issue for teachers as well.

Fourth, support public-private partnerships for broadband and education, inside and outside the school. Our government is providing broadband grants, including for access for schools, libraries and other “anchor institutions”, through a mechanism that couples government spending with private investment.

Also, the U.S. cable industry has announced a program to subsidize broadband connections to certain households with schoolchildren. We are working with the cable industry on this “A plus program,” and other American industries on other partnerships. These can and should be important part of the effort to provide learning support for students at school and at home.

Let me conclude with one more recommendation from our Broadband Plan: increasing flexibility in how E-rate funding is used.

Historically, schools receiving E-rate have been limited to using the Internet resources funded by E-Rate only for narrowly defined purposes. We have recommended giving schools flexibility to use E-Rate funded facilities for their broader communities, and have begun to implement that recommendation.

It would give schools the option of allowing the general public to use E-rate-funded Internet connections after school for such valuable activities as job searching, digital literacy programs, and online access to governmental services and resources.

That is one example of how we might tie together the two vital goals of this session -- connecting schools and connecting communities.

I look forward to learning about the experiences of my colleagues around the globe, and to participating in the discussion.