

**REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
“TAKING THE OPEN ROAD TO 5G”
WASHINGTON, DC
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Good afternoon. It is a treat to join you to kick off the final panel of the day—a technical deep dive into open radio access networks. I may be the last one of my colleagues to address you today, but the record shows that I was actually the first commissioner at the agency to speak about the power of open radio access networks—more than a year ago.

That’s for good reason. Open RAN has extraordinary potential for our economy and national security. That combination is something to seize—especially right now in the early days of 5G wireless deployment.

Our 5G future is about connecting everything. It is about radically higher speeds and lower latency, opening up possibilities for wireless that we cannot even fully imagine today. If we do this right, it could render our smartphones the least interesting thing about the future of wireless technology. Because this technology will become an input in everything we do, bringing new effectiveness and efficiency to every sector of our economy.

But doing this right means putting security first. It means recognizing that this new connectivity introduces new vulnerabilities. To date, the Federal Communications Commission has focused its efforts in this area on limiting the deployment of insecure wireless technology by restricting the use of network equipment from Chinese companies. We have encouraged our allies around the globe to do the same. But we should not be lulled into a false sense of security by flashy and well-promoted decisions about hardware and Administration headlines about Huawei or ZTE.

That’s because the 5G cybersecurity challenge is much bigger than simply dealing with a few Chinese companies. Restrictions on Huawei and ZTE are a minor fix for a much larger problem. While we can ban a few specific products, services, or companies, no country can isolate itself completely when we are connected worldwide. Plus, our national ambitions are far too great to be defined only in relation to a single country. We must focus now on our competitiveness, on strengthening our alliances around the world, and on reasserting our values—by building a new market for 5G equipment. That is how we will restore American leadership and secure 5G.

This is ultimately what the open RAN conversation is about. It is about making the market for 5G equipment both more competitive and more secure. So at Mobile World Congress Americas last year, I explained that if we can unlock the RAN and diversify the equipment in this part of our networks, we can increase security and push the market for equipment to where the United States is strongest—in software and semiconductors. That means we can increase vendor diversity and in the process increase competition and resiliency. Plus, we will benefit from software-centric innovation in radio access networks and faster upgrade cycles than with

traditional hardware. I have since testified about this idea before four different congressional committees. So I can say with authority momentum is building.

But we have more work to do. Because not everyone is convinced. Earlier this year the Attorney General of the United States called open RAN “just pie in the sky.” But one company has already made it into the history books as the first to launch an open RAN network in Japan. And open RAN hardware and software is now projected to reach 10 percent of the total market during the next few years.

If we want to lead in the development of open RAN—and I think we should—then we need to take action now to help build this movement from the ground up. Gathering today and learning from one another is a start. But we need to do more.

First, we need investment in research and development—from both the government and the private sector. There is a bipartisan bill in Congress right now, the USA Telecommunications Act, that would have the FCC provide \$750 million to accelerate the development of open RAN in the United States. This is a good idea.

Second, we need to launch an open RAN testbed that brings together operators, vendors, vertical interests, and government agencies. That’s something we can do right here at the FCC. Even better, we can build this into our ongoing work with the National Science Foundation to authorize city-wide 5G testbeds in New York and Salt Lake City.

Third, we need to build scale economies for open RAN technologies. This happens when we coordinate with other agencies at home and increase participation in international standards setting organizations abroad to help ensure no single vendor dominates networks. And as we move forward with plans to remove insecure equipment that is already in our networks, we should consider incentives for replacing that equipment with open RAN architectures. We also need to build incentives for producing the next-generation chips that open RAN technologies will require—and that includes research into the use of gallium nitride chips because early research shows it could be more efficient than traditional silicon chips for 5G technologies.

That’s a lot of work. But look at the expertise we have gathered—virtually—today. Thank you for listening. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of creating a more secure and competitive 5G future.