

REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY
IIC NORTH AMERICA DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA FORUM
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Good morning, everyone. It is a pleasure to join you for the IIC's North America Forum. Thank you to Verizon for hosting us, and thank you to the IIC for bringing together such a thoughtful and globally minded group of policymakers, industry leaders, scholars, and technologists.

As many of you know, I recently returned from Baku, where I made my first international trip as an FCC Commissioner to represent the United States at the World Telecommunication Development Conference.

For a new Commissioner, it was a remarkable way to see the global communications landscape up close. One thing became clear very quickly: even though the FCC is fundamentally a domestic agency, none of our challenges are purely domestic anymore. Spectrum allocation, satellite coordination, cybersecurity, infrastructure investment, and AI governance, these issues cross our borders with ease, even when our institutions do not. And if the 20 hours of travel to Azerbaijan taught me anything, it's that global coordination may be hard, but crossing nine time zones may be harder. I also learned that Azerbaijani hospitality is world-class, and that when someone offers you a second helping of [plov](#), they really mean it.

In Baku, I met with regulators and ministers from around the world. We traded stories about what keeps us up at night, what excites us, and where we need help from one another. Across South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, whether I was speaking with regulators or government officials, the themes were remarkably consistent. Everyone is trying to build high-quality, resilient, and secure networks. Everyone is trying to modernize outdated regulations. Everyone is confronting dramatic change in satellite services, AI systems, and spectrum demands. And everyone is wrestling with the same question: *How do we keep up?*

These conversations reinforced for me that the work we do at the FCC has implications far beyond our borders, and that staying engaged internationally is not optional, it is essential.

Let me start with infrastructure, because this was a dominant theme in Baku. Around the world, countries are trying to close connectivity gaps, upgrade networks for next-generation services, and fund these upgrades in ways that are economically sustainable. What struck me was how similar these conversations are to the ones we have here at home. Regulators everywhere are asking how to attract private capital, how to design universal service programs that actually achieve universal service, how to modernize permitting and rights-of-way, and how to strengthen the resilience of networks in the face of natural disasters or geopolitical risk.

In sharing the U.S. perspective, I emphasized something that applies globally: money alone does not build networks. We also need streamlined processes, clear expectations, a skilled workforce, strong engineering, trusted supply chains and secure architectures, principles that guide the FCC's Build America agenda as we work to expand broadband access across the country. And we need flexibility. The challenges of rural Alaska are not the same as those of downtown Washington, DC. And the challenges of the United States are not the same as Azerbaijan, Brazil, Gabon, or Japan. A one-size-fits-all policy approach to network deployment rarely works in a country as diverse as ours, and it certainly does not work across 194 countries.

Security was another topic that came up in nearly every conversation in Baku. Regulators are confronting the reality that communications networks are now national security assets. U.S. partners and allies were eager to hear about our experiences with trusted vendor frameworks, our push to modernize outage reporting, and our programs to improve emergency communications. These issues are no longer technical housekeeping, they are strategic decisions with geopolitical consequences. And as more countries modernize their networks, they are looking for models that balance innovation, competition, and security. The United States has an important role to play in that conversation.

No global meeting today is complete without a discussion on space and satellite services. The level of innovation here is extraordinary. Broadband constellations, direct-to-device services, Earth observation networks, and hybrid architectures are transforming how we think about communications. The FCC has been deeply engaged in updating our licensing processes, and I heard strong interest in how we approach satellite-terrestrial coexistence and long-term orbital sustainability. There is recognition that space is growing congested and contested as it becomes a commercially valuable domain. That means the global community has to work

together to ensure that the orbital environment remains viable, not just for today's systems, but for the next generation of innovation.

That brings me to regulatory simplification. One of the clearest lessons from Baku was how quickly regulators are moving to simplify their frameworks, from India's shift to a unified authorization regime, to Bangladesh's consolidation of license categories, to Brazil's recent streamlining of satellite and telecom approvals. Many nations are cutting friction, experimenting with regulatory sandboxes, adopting unified licensing models and, in some cases, leapfrogging older systems entirely. At the FCC, we are taking similar steps through initiatives like the Delete, Delete, Delete proceeding, which is focused on identifying and eliminating outdated, unnecessary, or duplicative regulations. These efforts help accelerate approvals, reduce uncertainty, and ensure our regulatory frameworks keep pace with technological innovation.

These global lessons are a wake-up call: U.S. leadership in communications policy is not guaranteed. Initiatives like Delete, Delete, Delete show we are taking steps to modernize our rules and procedures, but we must continue to act with intention to remain the global benchmark.

At the FCC, that means simplifying and accelerating satellite and wireless approvals, updating our rules for backhaul and fiber deployment, reducing unnecessary reporting burdens, and improving coordination among agencies involved in infrastructure. It also means embracing modern tools, modern engineering, and modern timelines. In a world where technologies evolve in months, regulatory processes cannot operate on multi-year cycles.

Spectrum was another dominant theme in Baku and remains one of the most consequential issues in global communications policy. Most countries around the world want to harmonize with the United States. They want to align their plans with ours. But they also need predictability. The restoration of auction authority and the development of a clear spectrum pipeline in the One Big Beautiful Bill are essential not only to domestic investment, but also for global coordination. If we want the world to move with us, we must show them where we are going, which requires cooperation and coordination among our domestic interests.

International regulators asked pointed questions about how the U.S. balances commercial needs, defense requirements, public safety obligations, and satellite interests. I explained that we begin with engineering. We gather data, we test assumptions, and we work closely with

stakeholders across the federal government. The decisions we make in spectrum policy carry consequences for national security, economic competitiveness, and the reliability of essential services. Our goal is to lead with transparency, technical rigor, and cooperation.

As we look toward WRC-27, the decisions made there will shape wireless investment, equipment availability, and innovation pathways worldwide. We have a responsibility to engage early and constructively, and to provide a clear signal about how we intend to protect incumbents, support innovation, and enable flexible use.

Another issue reshaping every international dialogue, including in Baku, is artificial intelligence. Countries are taking very different paths, from highly prescriptive frameworks to more decentralized approaches. At the FCC, our focus is grounded in our statutory mission. We are examining how AI can improve network reliability, detect interference, enhance emergency communications, and combat illegal robocalls. At the same time, we are paying close attention to issues of transparency, accountability, and verification. AI cannot become a black box in critical infrastructure. And because AI tools move across borders, global coordination is an important part of the development process. Fragmented rules will slow progress. The U.S. not only needs to lead in AI within our borders, but actively promote our AI systems, computing hardware, and standards throughout the world.

Trade policy and supply chain resilience were also central topics in Baku. Many countries are rethinking how they source equipment, how they diversify suppliers, and how they reduce dependence on single country vendors. The FCC has a direct role in ensuring our market remains trusted, competitive, and transparent. If the United States can demonstrate a stable, predictable, innovation-friendly regulatory environment, that strengthens not only our domestic economy but also our global leadership.

My trip to Baku left me optimistic. The challenges we face are significant, but they are shared. And when the world faces similar problems at the same time, that creates a tremendous opportunity for collaboration.

The United States has an important leadership role to play, but leadership today requires partnership. It requires clarity. It requires engineering. It requires transparency. And it requires a willingness to modernize our own systems to set the standard for global innovation.

As ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin said at the 2025 Global Symposium for Regulators: “You are not just regulators. You are the builders of the digital ecosystem. Innovation is your mission. Collaboration is your fuel.”

Those words capture exactly why international engagement matters, and why the United States will continue to show up. To collaborate with partners, build consensus where possible, invest in resilience, and lead with clarity, engineering and purpose.

Our goal is a global communications environment fueled by technology and defined by the opportunities it unlocks for every child, every community, and every nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.