

July 1, 2002

Dear Friends:

As you know, the Group of Eight held its annual G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada last week where, among many things, G8 leaders received the final report card of the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force). They created the Dot Force two years ago, as you may recall, as a public-private partnership to expand the benefits of information technology to the developing world. I am writing as the Non Profit Organization member of the U.S. Delegation to both bring to closure this significant effort and to update you on the two major initiatives we have undertaken as a result of its work.

A Precedent-Setting Task Force

The G8 leaders were bold in issuing the Okinawa Charter on the Global Information Society at the 2000 Summit and demonstrated their commitment to enabling all members of society to reap the benefits of the networked economy and society. The importance of information and communications technology (ICT) as a tool for development was not widely understood at that point and the G8 leaders were able to give it a new sense of urgency and a rarely matched platform for its advancement. Since that time, the importance of global poverty alleviation and the need to put all new tools in service of it has only been heightened by unfortunate events. The opportunities derived from the information age in which we now live are clearly in the hands of those who want to threaten peaceful world order. It is just as critical that we work to get this technology into the hands of those we want to support and nurture around the world as the benefits of ICT can do much to offset hostility by improved health, education and wealth creation within the developing world.

The work of the DOT Force made some significant advancements towards this end. An important set of recommendations for all sectors to follow was issued and accepted by the G8 at last year's Genoa Summit, taking a big step forward in making the case for the importance of ICT in development, and prioritizing a key set of action items (see report at www.dotforce.org). In the year following, the DOT Force members worked hard to turn those recommendations into action, developing several major initiatives designed to create large-scale, sustainable solutions in key areas such as developing national ICT strategies that advance development goals, supporting entrepreneurship, local content, and e-government. (see attached "report card"). Action of this kind is rarely the output of task forces of this size and nature.

As important as the issue itself, the G8 leaders took an unprecedented turn in designing the composition of the DOT Force that may have a major impact on the course of global policymaking. In creating a truly multi-sectoral task force, the G8 took care to include equal numbers of members from developing countries and non-profit organizations as they did their own governments and private sector representatives. In doing so, the G8 not only broke new ground on the issue, but also set an historical precedent in how governments, the private sector and civil society can work together toward shared goals and resources. The impact of this model on future policymaking should not be undervalued. Both the substance and process of the DOT Force can set a standard for the work of similar G8 and other global initiatives in the future. In fact, they are already being replicated and expanded within the recently launched United Nations ICT Task Force, in which Markle has also been asked to take on a leadership role.

Turning Recommendations into Action

The Markle Foundation has committed to two initiatives that help translate the G8's goals into action. Specifically, we and our partners have launched the *Global Digital Opportunity Initiative*, to advance national ICT strategies for development, and the *Partnership for Global Policy Participation*, to strengthen the role of developing nations in global ICT policymaking.

The *Global Digital Opportunity Initiative* is a public-private partnership Markle created with the United Nations Development Programme and a large number of respected North and South individuals, companies and non-profits committed to mobilizing expertise and resources for ICT and development. I wrote to you in February at the time of the launch of this exciting initiative (see attached) and look forward to keeping you apprised of its work, or, better yet, involving you in it. We have commenced activity in several African countries as of this time.

I am pleased that we and our partners have also formed a *Partnership for Global Policy Participation* (www.markle.org/globalpolicy). The Partnership, a multi-sectoral organization will serve as an important means to promote more inclusive global policymaking on ICT issues. The process of globalization and the increasingly borderless nature of networks and technologies mean that global ICT policy decisions have major implications for developing countries. Full and equitable participation by these nations within related policy venues is therefore critical to the realization of their developmental goals. I have attached a 'roadmap' we developed to guide this work, entitled "*Global Policymaking for Information and Communications Technologies: Enabling Meaningful Participation by Developing-Nation Stakeholders.*"

The Partnership will serve as an important operational vehicle, going forward in parallel with related work within the United Nations ICT Task Force. Specifically, the Partnership will aim to: continue to convene and raise awareness of the importance of effective participation in global ICT policymaking; develop and implement key recommendations suggested by the roadmap and a related scoping study sponsored by the

U.K. Department for International Development (see www.dfid.gov.uk); and work to identify and coordinate additional partners and resources for this work. We welcome additional interest in both the objectives and work of this group.

Looking Forward

It has been an honor to serve as part of this remarkable DOT Force effort. Looking ahead, it is clear that there is much more to be done. We are all more focused than ever on the interdependence of our world and the need to reduce the poverty in which so many of its people live. Information and communications technology provides unprecedented opportunities to approach development in new, innovative, and more effective ways.

We look forward to sharing with you the progress of our partnerships as we continue to invest in the potential of ICT to contribute to development goals. In the meantime, please make sure we are aware of your efforts in this area and let us know in turn if you would like to learn more about our work. Feel free to contact me or Noa Meyer (nmeyer@markle.org), and I hope we will have the opportunity to work together to achieve common goals.

Sincerely,
Zoë Baird