

MARKLE FOUNDATION

**Remarks by Zoë Baird
President, Markle Foundation
U.S. Non-profit Organization Member of the DOT Force**

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On behalf of the Markle Foundation and other non-profit organizations, it is a pleasure to be here and we look forward to being part of this effort.

I had the privilege of participating in the Heads of State meeting in Tokyo last July where this initiative was first discussed, and I must commend you for the leadership you have exhibited by expanding the participants and taking this forward with a sense of importance and urgency.

And I look forward to hearing from the country leaders from outside the G-8 about how we can support your objectives.

Creating digital opportunity for all is a challenge of enormous magnitude. Many of us around this table know first-hand the economic, social and political benefits a networked world can provide. But, we also know that market forces alone will not drive these benefits to places where there are obstacles. Lack of infrastructure, human capacity, access to capital, or unprepared regulatory environments are clear obstacles for many countries to create their own participation.

Let us be clear about why we must collectively devote ourselves to creating digital opportunities.

On the one hand, we are seeing growing evidence that information and communication technologies can meet some of people's most critical needs, and, in some instances, even allow countries to "leapfrog" over some of the persistent development challenges of the last twenty years. No one is suggesting that technology is a silver bullet here, rather, that it can be a powerful and breakthrough complement or change agent to current development efforts.

On the other hand, we know that the unique nature of the information revolution means that failing to find ways to allow those currently not part of the networked world to participate risks deepening the gap even further. And, we know that some efforts, despite their best intentions, have the potential to fail or to harm by not respecting local cultures, perspectives and needs.

In short, the potential is enormous and so is the peril. But it is important to recognize today that, while this group represents a vast array of interests in the world, we are all here for the same reason – our convergence of interests in improving people’s lives and our common recognition that information and communication technologies can make a meaningful, if not transformational, contribution to that end.

This task force has the potential to be the embodiment of this view, and to be significant for several reasons:

First, we are at a unique moment in time. As information and communication technologies grow globally at an exponential rate, unprecedented resources can be directed toward improving life in ways that may not be true several years from now. We currently find ourselves in an environment in which business and regulatory models are not yet fixed, government and public expectations are not formed, and many stakeholders’ views are not set. If we miss this moment, we can easily find ourselves ten years from now with the commercial sector disinterested, the developing world disappointed, and the non-profit community having limited the role of ICT in their strategies.

Second, the very composition of this task force can be seen as a powerful standard for the new global policy-making bodies that are emerging as a result of globalization and the rise of the networked world. Many of our institutions are learning the hard way that all stakeholders must be represented at the table if they are to succeed. Placing non-profit organizations and developing countries at this table is necessary to the DOT Force’s effectiveness and legitimacy. While the success of the DOT Force’s work remains to be achieved -- and depends on our ability to work together to make something of it – the equal representation of sectors will have lasting impact in setting standards for policy-making in the future.

Lastly, the substantial resources, knowledge and experience represented in this group raises the bar for this task force, encouraging us to produce much more than a report, but rather an effective strategy that broadly enables people to reap the benefits of the networked world and creates a serious mobilization of resources. The creation of the DOT Force has generated a great deal of initial interest and raised expectations...And that is exactly the point.

Let me turn to my own sector -- the non-profit organizations in this room. We represent only the beginning of the on-the-ground expertise, commitment and resources that ultimately will be necessary to make this effort work.

Each one of these organizations has a critical role to play: Whether it is by utilizing our deep community networks, employing the power of examples of work we have already done, putting our financial resources toward new strategic endeavors, or by forming stronger relationships with our counterparts in the South in order to strengthen their work.

We will need to be a vehicle for broad non-profit input as well as dissemination. And, this community will be an important partner in attending to preserving local cultures.

Having co-led the U.S. private sector working group leading up to the G-8 Summit in Okinawa, we saw first-hand the desire of non-profits, businesses, and governments to work together. Our goal is to continue that trend by further bridging the non-profit community with the ICT strategies and applications that can support the goals of developing countries.

With a shared set of principles, and the vast resources represented around this table, we should be able to make the significant idea of the DOT Force generate significant output.

Specifically, we should aim for our work: to set important goals; to create the context for country strategies; to identify and scale up best practices; and to create substantial commitment and investment for the future.

Achievement on these fronts will create the foundation for self-generating growth and will ultimately have made the DOT Force an important, though temporary, interlocutor.

Thank you.