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ICT KEY TO G-20 PLANS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

PITTSBURGH - Information and communication technologies (ICT) must be central to any government policies to revive and maintain economic growth according to a new international initiative launched today on the eve of the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh.

National technology industry associations and companies joined today to launch the G-20 ICT Policy Network - a collaboration designed to gain universal acceptance of ICT as the primary engine for sustainable economic growth to the Group of 20 (G-20) nations. The initiative was established by members of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) - a consortium of nearly 70 IT industry associations from economies around the world.

"A sustainable and robust recovery is only possible with pro-innovation capital, trade and environmental policies," said TechAmerica and WITSA President, Phillip J. Bond, speaking on behalf of founding members of the G-20 ICT Policy Network. "Therefore, we are united today in the belief that innovation must be a central concern of any coordinated response."

Bond went on to point out that President Barack Obama recently highlighted technology's role in recovery when he said Pittsburgh, the venue for the G-20 Summit, "stands as a bold example of how to create new jobs and industries while transitioning to a 21st century economy - from the city of steel to a center for high-tech innovation."

WITSA Secretary General Jim Poisant agreed, adding that the G-20 Summit was a critical venue to discuss the importance of ICT. "The G-20 is emerging as a key forum to coordinate global responses to the challenges of an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. The nations represented here are responsible for 85% of global gross national product, 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world population – discussions here must account for the leading role ICT plays in economies and societies around the world."

The global ICT policy initiative is focused on three major areas:

- next-generation broadband infrastructure,
- energy-efficiency improvements and
- open international trade.

It aims to ensure G-20 policies designed to stimulate economic growth feature ICT as the chief catalyst for economic innovation. Today, ICT forms the basis of new advances in education, transportation, health care and electronic access to government services.

Recognizing that private capital will provide the bulk of investment, the G-20 must develop coordinated policies designed to lower investment costs through consistent regulatory principles while ensuring fair competition. Providing a supportive framework for continued private-sector investment in next-generation broadband infrastructure will have an enormous positive impact on job creation and productivity.

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The use of ICT is also an essential component in mitigating the impact of climate change. The G-20 ICT Policy Network is among those urging a rapid shift to smart, green technology to achieve major improvements in energy efficiency. ICT developments are fueling industrial energy savings, smart-grid technologies, and new virtual and teleworking opportunities.

The G-20 ICT Policy Network believes open trade in ICT goods and services is essential for the global economy. The group is encouraged by the resumption of international trade negotiations and commitment to achieve a successful conclusion of the 8-year-old Doha Round in 2010. The momentum for reviving these trade negotiations came from a meeting of G-20 Trade Ministers in New Delhi in the first week of September, underscoring the growing importance of the G-20 process.

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