SPOTLIGHT

SOCIAL MEDIA: We are delighted to share our new social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter. Please take a moment to click on the social media links below, and follow us, to stay up to date on the latest WITSA news.

Seeking Nominations for the 2020 WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards!

We are extremely pleased to launch the nomination phase of our 2020 Global ICT Excellence Awards! The 2020 WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards will be presented to select users and providers whose use and applications of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) exhibit exceptional achievement within six (6) broad categories:

1. Public/Private Partnership Award
2. Digital Opportunity/Inclusion Award
3. Sustainable Growth

4. Innovative eHealth Solutions

5. Digital Innovation Award

6. E-Education & Learning Award

In addition, a Chairman's Award will be presented to a nominee selected from the entire pool of candidates from all award categories.

Candidates for these Awards are nominated by ICT experts from around the world who span nearly 80 countries/economies. The 2020 WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards will take place at the September 14-16, 2020 World Congress on IT in Penang, Malaysia. A message with nomination instructions will be sent to members shortly. If you have any questions, please contact Anders Halvorsen at ahalvorsen@witsa.org or Molly Poisant at molly@witsa.org

WITSA Secretary General: Making the Future of Work Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities

On November 22, 2019, WITSA Secretary General, Dr. James H. Poisant, served as session Rapporteur and as a plenary session panelist at the “Making the Future of Work Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities” conference, in Geneva, Switzerland. Video recordings of these sessions are available here.

WORLD CONGRESS ON IT (WCIT)

MOU signed with WCIT2020, Smart City Council (SCC), and Smart City Network (SCN)

An MOU was signed with WCIT2020, Smart City Council (SCC), and Smart City Network (SCN) to collaborate for the ASOCIO Smart City Summit which will be one of the main Track in WCIT 2020 in Penang in September this year. Thank you PIKOM for hosting this session.
Edits Requested: Final "Big Tech" Paper Draft

In 2018, WITSA published a policy statement seeking to address some of the most worrisome misconceptions and threats to the multilateral trading system that has served the ICT industry as well as all other industries, citizens and consumers so well in modern times. Growing animus toward “Big Tech” companies and generalized opposition to technological innovation is threatening industry development and economic growth by engendering support for policies that are expressly designed to inhibit it. That is deeply problematic for future progress, prosperity, and competitiveness. The concerns being raised about the technology industry, in particular large tech companies today are not all frivolous or without merit. But overall, being negatively affected by “techlash” is most likely to reduce individual and societal welfare and benefits.

This paper’s intention is to debunk the main misinformation and misconceptions that are associated with this “techlash” and identifies several recommended actions and policy principles which WITSA believes can rekindle faith and trust in technology industry for the betterment and delivery of the “Promise of the Digital Age” where everyone on earth benefits from the use of ICT.

The paper addresses three key areas of concern: Anti-trust and competition; privacy and exploitation; disinformation and election integrity. This draft does not discuss digital taxation or encryption, which may be covered in separate papers this year.

A "final" draft paper will be circulated to members soon for comment.
WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce (JSI) Update

In Geneva, the seventh round of JSI negotiations took place during the week of February 17th with progress now being made on a number of key issues in the focus groups, although unsurprisingly not on the contentious ones, such as data flows. The hope is that sufficient progress can be made on the easier issues by the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, which will take place in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, on June 8-11. That would allow negotiators to then move on to the more difficult ones after the summer. Next round will take place second half of March and a final round will take place end of April.

WITSA recently published a policy statement entitled “Supporting Digital Trade Rules for Innovation and Sustainable Economic Development: A Case for a Trade Agreement”, as well as an action plan to members on how best to support the ongoing efforts at the World Trade Organization to negotiate a new comprehensive e-commerce agreement. The Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce (JSI) presents a critical opportunity for the global trade body to prove its relevance in the current political environment and could lead to broader WTO reforms as well. WITSA is concerned about the very real risk that the significant achievements in multilateral trade liberalization since 1948 might begin to erode, as nations become introspective and protective in the face of global financial and economic challenges. This is a serious and complex issue for the global business community, affecting not just the future of multilateral negotiations, but - equally important - the future of global trade rule making and dispute settlement. A successful conclusion of the WTO e-commerce negotiations resulting in an agreement by the 2020 WTO Ministerial would invigorate global digital trade at a critical time and enhance the stature and relevance of the global trade body.

Members were requested to urgently contact their permanent representatives in Geneva as well as their local trade officials in order to encourage the successful conclusion of an inclusive, high-standard plurilateral WTO agreement that builds on existing WTO agreements and frameworks, agreed to by as many countries as possible. Members were encouraged to make the following key points in support of a new WTO ecommerce trade agreement, which should:

- Permanently prohibit customs duties and other discriminatory measures from being applied to electronic transmissions.
- Be compliant with WTO non-discrimination principles, such as Most-Favored Nation (MFN) and National Treatment (NT);
- Enable the secure movement of data across borders;
- Prohibit the forced localization of data or computing facilities for all sectors;
- Permanently prohibit customs duties and other discriminatory measures from being applied to electronic transmissions;
- Include further commitments on trade facilitation that help enable cross-border e-commerce for businesses of all sizes, especially micro-, small- and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs);
- Include protections against requirements that companies provide source code or proprietary algorithms as a condition of market access, which severely limits open trade and investment and violates the principle of non-discrimination so fundamental to the entire trade system;
- Prohibit governments from imposing measures requiring companies to purchase or use a particular technology and governments from according a preference to a particular technology in their markets and should retain the obligation to support international standards which are integral to interoperable software, hardware and services which underpin the open Internet;
- Strengthen existing cybersecurity collaboration mechanisms;
- Recognize that personal information must be protected regardless of where it is located, but also acknowledge that different approaches can achieve comparable levels of privacy protection and provide a mechanism to guarantee international transfers of protected data;
• Recognize the importance of open government data by promoting access in machine-readable and open formats leveraging international standards.

WITSA to Organize Workshop at eCommerce Week 2020 in Geneva

WITSA has been approved to organize a session at eCommerce Week 2020 entitled “Network Readiness: How Can Societies Prepare for the Future and Deliver the Promise of the Digital Age?” eCommerce Week will be organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva from April 27th through May 1st under the theme: “Creating Value in the Digital Economy”. The Session will be held at Palais des Nations, Geneva on THURSDAY 30 APRIL from 4:30 to 6 pm.

This workshop will build upon the findings of the 2019 Network Readiness Index (NRI) and further explore the changing impact of ICT on our world and navigate the right path forward. Panelists will provide their unique insights on what models, best practices, and lessons learned from across the globe have the best potential to improve the competitiveness and well-being of nations, “Fulfilling the Promise of the Digital Age” - the promise that every person on Earth will eventually be connected and benefiting from ICTs.

MEMBER NEWS

CAMTIC Assembly Elects New Board of Directors
Congratulations to the new CAMTIC President, Mr. Paul Fervoy. Members of the Chamber of Information and Communication Technologies (CAMTIC), meeting in the General Assembly, elected eight members of the board of directors for a period of two years. CAMTIC President Mr. Fervoy is the Vice President of the Extendo company (formerly MiWeb). Paul Fervoy has been part of the CAMTIC board of directors for 16 years!

TechUK publishes report: “A Vision for Digital Trade”

On February 19, techUK presented its report outlining “A Vision for Digital Trade” in Brussels, in a joint event with the European Services Forum. MEP Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Vice-Chair of the International Trade Committee in the European Parliament, delivered a keynote speech, followed by a panel discussion on digital trade in the era of protectionism, with speakers from the European Commission, European Centre for International Political Economy, IBM and Sage.

UK and Spanish tech trade associations call for Adequacy Agreement

TechUK and Ametic have today published a joint paper which outlines the importance of data transfers between the UK and Spain and calls for the continued free flow of data between the UK and the EU after 31 December 2020. Once the transition period is over at the end of the year, the automatic ability for personal data to flow between the UK and EU Member States will come to an end. In an increasingly digital economy, the transfer of personal data has become crucial for businesses of every size and sector. Ensuring the continued free flow of data has been a priority issue for techUK ever since the 2016 EU referendum result given the importance to the technology industry and the wider economy.

NZTech Inform - strengthening our ecosystem

February 26, 2020: Today, I am presenting at a conference in Wellington sharing how the Tech Alliance helps strengthen our ecosystem. There are now 24 associations in the Alliance, working together to help create a more prosperous New Zealand underpinned by technology.
NASSCOM Technology & Leadership Forum 2020 Hold in Mumbai Feb. 12-14

More than 1600 delegates from over 14 countries joined us to make our 28th edition of NASSCOM Technology & Leadership Forum (NTLF) 2020 a roaring success. With lots of interesting formats like, Exclusive Roundtables, Intimate Huddle Sessions with mentors, Fish bowl, Techcapsules, Investor-Enterprise meets with start-ups, Focused SME pitch sessions, keynotes and panels, unconference with leaders, start-ups on Showcase, the 3-day experience was trending all over. The event was also graced by a few eminent ministers. By offering once in a lifetime experiences, Mumbai left us all with unforgettable memories.

intaj Organizes MENA ICT Forum 2020

The MENA ICT Forum 2020 coincides with 20 years of relentless support, extended by His Majesty to Jordan’s ICT sector. The forum was inaugurated in 1999 by His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, resulting in a five-year roadmap to bolster a strong ICT sector by capitalizing on Jordan’s core asset; the country’s human capital.

CAN Infotech 2020 successfully completed
CAN Infotech 2020 successfully completed. Thanks to all stakeholders for your kind support and cooperation.

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techUK Provides Comments on Online Harms

February 13, 2020: techUK is pleased to see continued progress being made by Government on the issue of online harms. Our members remain absolutely committed to keeping users safe online and today’s announcement marks the next phase of close and constructive working between Government and Industry.

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ITAN Elects Lagos Chapter Executive Committee

January 25, 2020: The Information Technology Association of Nigeria (ITAN) congratulates its Lagos chapter on the election of its Executive Committee.

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ICANN to Hold First-Ever Remote Public Meeting

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) today announced that its ICANN67 Public Meeting, which was to be held in Cancún, Mexico, will now be held via remote participation-only. This decision was made as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, considered a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization.

ICC spotlights need for globally competitive market in e-payments

"ICC has published a paper on an issue central to the vitality and growth of the digital economy: liberalization of global markets in electronic payment services (EPS) and trade commitments necessary to achieve it."

OECD Launches AI Policy Observatory (OECD.AI)

The OECD AI Policy Observatory (OECD.AI), launched on 27 February, aims to help countries enable, nurture and monitor the responsible development of trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) systems for the benefit of society.
OECD.AI combines resources from across the OECD with those of partners from all stakeholder groups in order to provide a comprehensive online database of AI policies from around the world, present multidisciplinary, evidence-based policy analysis on AI, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue.

As an inclusive online platform for public policy on AI, OECD.AI builds on the OECD’s Recommendation on Artificial Intelligence (OECD AI Principles), the first intergovernmental standard on AI. OECD countries adopted the AI Principles in May 2019, and a range of partner economies have since adhered to them. The OECD AI Principles also provided the basis for the G20 AI Principles endorsed by Leaders in June 2019.

OECD Publishes Services Trade Restrictiveness Index: Policy Trends up to 2020

Launched in 2014, and updated annually, the OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) is a unique, evidence-based tool that provides information on regulations affecting trade in services in 22 sectors across all OECD member countries and Brazil, the People’s Republic of China, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, South Africa, and Thailand. These countries and sectors represent over 80% of global trade in services.

12th WTO Ministerial registration information is now available!

The 12th WTO Ministerial registration information is now available. Note that registration for NGOs (including the private sector) must be submitted by 29th March. The Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) will take place from 8 to 11 June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

See the Official MC12 Web Site for additional information.

MsKinsey Report: Connected world - An evolution in connectivity beyond the 5G revolution
Enabling more people to plug into global flows of information, communication, and services could add another $1.5 trillion to $2 trillion to GDP.

UN: The Impact of Digital Technologies

If you haven't seen the United Nations article on the impact of digital technology, you should. Digital technologies have advanced more rapidly than any innovation in our history – reaching around 50 percent of the developing world’s population in only two decades and transforming societies. By enhancing connectivity, financial inclusion, access to trade and public services, technology can be a great equalizer.

February 19, 2020: Communication from the European Commission: Shaping Europe's digital future

On 19 February 2020, the European Commission issued a communication (PDF) outlining its three key objectives that will help Europe as it continues its digital transformation over the next five years: Technology that works for people. A fair and competitive economy. An open, democratic and sustainable society.

OECD seeks input on draft Model Rules for Reporting for Platform Operators with respect to Sellers in the Sharing and Gig Economy

The OECD invites public input on the development of Model Rules to collect information on transactions and income realised by platform sellers. Deadline: 20 March 2020
European Commission presents strategies for data and Artificial Intelligence

On February 19, the European Commission published a digital package, including its five-year plans for the European digital economy. The package includes a Digital Strategy, a Data Strategy and a White Paper on Artificial Intelligence. The first one aims to make Europe a more resilient and competitive player on the global stage, through investment in EU digital technologies and skills, online platform regulation and a revamping of EU competition rules. The second focuses on creating a Single Market for Data, including sector-specific data spaces by 2030. The third one is a discussion paper aimed at both making Europe more competitive on the global AI market and grounding that development in EU values and fundamental rights.

Internet Shutdowns Become a Favorite Tool of Governments: ‘It’s Like We Suddenly Went Blind’

WSJ, Feb. 25’20: No global agreements explicitly cover internet freedoms, though the right to information is guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a nonbinding set of principles adopted by the U.N. Telecom companies, which rely on government licenses and agree to follow a nation’s laws, rarely push back. Those that try to ask questions or negotiate find they don’t have much leverage.

Facebook Publishes Whitepaper: Charting a Way Forward on Online Content Regulation

February 17, 2020: “To be clear, this isn’t about passing off responsibility. Facebook is not waiting for regulation; we’re continuing to make progress on these issues ourselves.”
DIGITALEUROPE Publishes Report: A stronger digital industrial Europe - Digital Transformation as its FOCUS

February 2020: One of the key messages of that paper is that if Europe is serious about digital then it needs to invest in it. Only 3% of the Commission’s budget proposal is dedicated to digital. This is far too low if you consider that our citizens need digital skills, our SMEs need financing and infrastructure, and we need to deploy new technologies so that businesses can grow and create jobs. Instead, we call for 10% of the EU budget going to digital with half of it dedicated to the deployment of new technologies.

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UNESCO Celebrates International Day of Women and Girls in Science

On February 11, the world celebrated the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

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DIGITALEUROPE Event: Smart mobility: is the EU in pole position in the global race? (March 12, 2020)

As a new Commission is betting the Union on a European Green Deal and on digitisation, DIGITALEUROPE wants to take up this challenge, with a DiPP-style debate. The following experts have kindly agreed to launch this conversation on the 12th of March 2020 8:30 - 10:00 am CET

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Election Interference and the Emperor's New Clothes

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report, February 4, 2020: “Research on the political effect of the internet suggests that fake news and other social media campaigns do not change people’s minds. They confirm existing beliefs and exacerbate existing fears and conflicts.”
Dr. Soumitra Dutta: The Technology Pendulum - From hope to fear – and back?

Dr. Dutta: "I feel that at the end of the first two decades of this century, the technology pendulum has decidedly swung from hope to fear. At a time when we are witnessing exponential increases in the power of technology with all its positive opportunities, the fears of the negative impacts of technology on our lives and on our world is top of mind for many. This has to change. We have to help swing the technology pendulum back to hope."

IGF 2020 Call For Validation of Thematic Tracks

Input received indicated that the Berlin themes of Data Governance; Digital Inclusion and Security, Safety, Stability, Resilience were still relevant. Two additional themes were identified - climate change and environmental sustainability and digital economy - as important issues that should be considered for the 2020 programme. A number of stakeholders felt that these topics are at the centre of current global discussions and political processes.

UNICEF Accessible Digital Textbooks for All Initiative Enables Inclusive Education

Accessible Digital Textbooks for All is an initiative part of the global agenda of UNICEF on Inclusive education. It is about appreciating learners’ diversity, valuing their well-being, respecting their inherent dignity and autonomy. You can learn more about this program here: Accessible Digital Textbooks for All Initiative.
Taiwan’s Disinformation Solution

The American Interest, February 13, 2020: Radical Transparency: “The abject failure of Chinese disinformation to seriously affect Taiwan’s presidential election is a promising sign that even small democracies can challenge a huge and tech-savvy dictatorship when it comes to information warfare. But this requires empowering governments, civil society, and media platforms through smart and creative tech strategies built on trust, transparency, participation, and inclusiveness.”

Amid privacy and security failures, digital IDs advance

Computerworld, January 6, 2020: Blockchain-based digital wallets could give owners control over their digital identity in a way that would eliminate the business silo systems of today.

PARTNER NEWS

2020 AI for Good Global Summit to scale AI-powered problem solving for global impact

Ten years remain to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Leaders in AI and humanitarian action will convene at the 2020 AI for Good Global Summit with strong intent to ensure that
‘AI for Good’ solutions achieve a scale matching that of the ambitions captured by the SDGs.

Now in its fourth edition, the 2020 AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva, 4-8 May 2020, will continue to connect AI innovators with public and private-sector decision-makers in the interests of stimulating the discovery and delivery of ‘AI for Good’ solutions for all.

UNCTAD: To keep track of the SDGs, we need a data revolution

With just 10 years to go to meet the Sustainable Development Goals — our shared vision to end poverty, save the planet and build a peaceful world — this year kicks off the United Nation's Decade of Action to reach the goals by 2030. To track progress, we'll need nothing short of a data revolution. Existing data need to be complemented with new data to reflect the reality more fully. Official statistical systems must adapt and consider new approaches to ensure success.

UNCTAD: Restoring competition in "winner-took-all" digital platform markets

Competition law and policy can help ensure open and accessible markets with fair and reasonable terms for businesses

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