

Foreword

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The current global recession has affected business in nearly every industry and geographical region; it is also having a deep and wide impact on societies around the world. Taking decisive action to reprioritize during any slowdown is a key focus for companies and countries, and we are all in the process of taking the necessary measures that will enable us to adjust to today's reality. It is fundamental, however, that we do not allow short-term challenges to distract us from planning for longer-term opportunities to achieve sustainable growth.

I believe that we are faced with a unique opportunity to nurture global economic prosperity, and ubiquitous broadband access is a key part of the solution. By investing in the development and acceleration of a global broadband infrastructure, we can provide Internet access for all of the world's citizens. This means we can create jobs, provide better access to health care and education, connect small business owners to new customers, and in some countries create a middle class that will raise the standard of living and national GDP.

There is plenty of work to do in providing access. For example, while 77 out of every 100 Canadian residents uses the Internet, there are only 16 out of 100 users in Panama, according to 2007 ITU data and analysis. The number of broadband subscribers of the same two countries is in equal contrast; while 28 of every 100 Canadian residents have broadband subscriptions, there is only 1 broadband subscriber per 100 in Panama. Equally important is the opportunity for countries that are considered advanced when compared to other countries from around the world. For example, Korea, Rep., considered the leader in broadband penetration, only has 29 broadband subscribers per 100 residents, according to ITU data.

Achieving ubiquitous broadband access is in the best interest of citizens, businesses, and governments alike. However, we will succeed in this effort only through a collaborative partnership—businesses working alongside health-care providers, educators, governments, and nongovernmental organizations. Only by providing the means for people everywhere to access broadband—from the most remote villages to the densest urban centers—will we have the potential to experience a truly connected global economy.

Broadband provides unprecedented opportunities for people to communicate with others, access information, improve education and health care, enter new

markets, expand the reach of businesses, and so much more. Imagine how different the world—and the world economy—would be if we could extend connectivity to all corners of the globe. Broadband literally transforms the way we live, work, play, and learn.

And when we talk about broadband, we are really talking about *mobile* broadband, enabled by a global wireless infrastructure built on an Internet Protocol network platform. Mobility represents the only way for the world to achieve ubiquitous broadband access, allowing the power of the network to scale beyond the limits of traditional hard-wired environments.

Prior to the emergence of the global economic crisis, the world was gaining momentum toward the next phase of the Internet, built on a network platform and fueled by productivity-enhancing collaboration tools and networked applications. Despite the current financial setbacks, we are still collectively poised to reap the benefits of this next phase, enabled by a worldwide mobile broadband network infrastructure.

With this in mind, I believe that the most important step government and business leaders in both developed and developing nations can take to encourage economic growth and global prosperity is to concentrate—collectively, collaboratively—on longer-term opportunities such as universal broadband access.

Let's rise to the challenge, and in doing so, raise the quality of life—and our economic prosperity for generations to come. Now is the time to invest in ubiquitous broadband and empower all of the world's citizens to participate in the human network.

Cisco is pleased to sponsor *The Global Information Technology Report 2008–2009*, including the Networked Readiness Index. We hope that these will provide important insight into how we can use mobility to help address the immense challenges and opportunities ahead.