International Business Community Calls on Policymakers Worldwide to Adopt Clear and Consistent Guidance on Essential Workers that Includes Information and Communications Technology Workers During COVID-19 Pandemic

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As the world's leading business associations, we call on policymakers globally to adopt clear and consistent guidance regarding essential workers, including information and communications technology (ICT) workers, for the purpose of aiding governments around the globe working to protect public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ICT products, services, and components play an indispensable role in driving innovation and economic growth across the global economy, including in the areas of health care, financial services, transportation, energy, and public safety. At this time of crisis, they are also critical to public health. Workers across the ICT sector are critical to supporting health care providers; allowing employees to work remotely; securing and servicing networks, data centers, and cloud services; enabling e-commerce and the delivery of food, medicine, and other necessities; keeping students engaged and learning; manufacturing technology products and components from microprocessors to supercomputers; and otherwise enabling governments to respond to this global health crisis. Ensuring that these essential employees can continue to work during this time is vital. They must be able to provide the products and services that people need during this challenging time, especially in the face of government lockdowns, shelter-in-place orders, or other restrictions on personal movement.

Governments should provide clear and comprehensive guidance to assure the continuation of critical ICT manufacturing and uninterrupted delivery of essential services. Recent guidance published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) provides a useful template from which governments around the world can draw, designating as essential during the COVID-19 crisis a wide range of ICT workers, including in the following categories:

✔ **Data center operators, including system administrators, HVAC & electrical engineers, security personnel, IT managers and purchasers, data transfer solutions engineers, software and hardware engineers, and database administrators, for all industries (including financial services).**

✔ **Workers who support client service centers, field engineers, and other technicians and workers supporting critical infrastructure, as well as manufacturers and supply chain vendors that provide hardware and software, support services, research and development, and information technology equipment (to include microelectronics and semiconductors), and HVAC and electrical equipment for critical infrastructure, and test labs and certification agencies that qualify such equipment(to include microelectronics, optoelectronics, and semiconductors) for critical infrastructure, including data centers.**

✔ **Workers needed to preempt and respond to cyber incidents involving critical infrastructure, including medical facilities, SLTT governments and federal facilities, energy and utilities, and banks and financial institutions, securities/other exchanges, other entities that support the functioning of capital markets, public works, critical manufacturing, food & agricultural production, transportation, and other critical infrastructure categories and personnel, in addition to all cyber defense workers (who can't perform their duties remotely).**

✔ **Suppliers, designers, transporters and other workers supporting the manufacture, distribution and provision and construction of essential global, national and local infrastructure for computing services (including cloud computing services and telework capabilities), business infrastructure, financial transactions/services, web-based services, and critical manufacturing.**

✔ **Workers who support command centers, including, but not limited to Network Operations Command Centers, Broadcast Operations Control Centers and Security Operations Command Centers.**

✔ **Maintenance of communications infrastructure- including privately owned and maintained communication systems-supported by technicians, operators, call -centers, wireline and wireless providers, cable service providers, satellite operations, Internet Exchange Points, Points of Presence, Network Access Points, back haul and front haul facilities, and manufacturers and distributors of communications equipment.**

✔ **Engineers, technicians and associated personnel responsible for infrastructure construction and restoration, including contractors for construction and engineering of fiber optic cables, buried conduit, small cells, other wireless facilities, and other communications sector-related infrastructure. This includes construction of new facilities and deployment of new technology as these are required to address congestion or customer usage due to unprecedented use of remote services.**

✔ **Installation, maintenance and repair technicians that establish, support or repair service as needed.**

✔ **Suppliers, designers, transporters and other workers supporting the manufacture, distribution and provision and construction of essential global, national and local infrastructure for computing services (including cloud computing services and telework capabilities), business infrastructure, financial transactions/services, web-based services, and critical manufacturing.**

✔ **Workers supporting communications systems and information technology- and work from home solutions-used by law enforcement, public safety, medical, energy, public works, critical manufacturing, food & agricultural production, financial services, education, and other critical industries and businesses.**

✔ **Employees required in person to support Software as a Service businesses that enable remote working, performance of business operations, distance learning, media services, and digital health offerings, or required for technical support crucial for business continuity and connectivity.**

(The categories of ICT workers referenced above constitute a non-exhaustive list; please refer to the CISA guidance, which will continue to be updated in the future as circumstances warrant, for the complete list of essential ICT workers.)

We urge leaders at every level of government, in economies across the globe, to adopt similarly clear and comprehensive guidance in their jurisdictions.

In the United States, it is critical that policymakers at the state and local level not only adopt the guidance on essential workers issued by CISA, but that state and local officials clearly communication that guidance to those on the frontlines enforcing shelter-in-place or stay-at-home orders. Beyond that, we encourage that global governments follow a similar approach, ensuring that clear and consistent guidance is pushed out to officials charged with enforcing orders locally. Undertaking these actions will ensure ICT workers are designated as "essential" so they may continue performing their critical jobs and functions, including keeping local communities safe, secure, and connected. We stand ready to support our colleagues in government in meeting this common challenge in constructive, decisive, and pragmatic ways.