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PRESENTATION OF THE ASOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA  
DE INTERNET (ALAI)

(Raúl Echeberría – Executive Director)

Good morning:

Ambassador Kevin O'Reilly, U.S. Coordinator for the Summit of the Americas,

Ms. María Celina Conte, Director of the Secretariat of the Summit of the Americas, Authorities of the OAS,

Representatives of all the countries of the Americas,

Colleagues from civil society, youth, and the private sector alongside whom we are making this presentation today, in this forum.

My name is Raúl Echeberría and I am the Executive Director of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Internet – ALAI. It is an organization representative of the digital private sector in Latin America.

It is an honor to have the opportunity to address you today to share some of our reflections on this path to the Summit of the Americas, which we have already been able to channel, along with other colleagues from the private sector, through the process of the Americas Business Dialogue, convened by the IDB, and in which we had the responsibility of serving as co-moderator of the digital economy working group.

Some of our recommendations have already been taken up in the draft Commitments, and I hope that my remarks will help reinforce the importance of others, and perhaps illustrate equally important crosscutting elements.

While this process concerns a Summit of the Americas, allow me to speak to you from the perspective of Latin America, which is the main area of action of ALAI.

This summit takes place at a very timely moment in a world in constant tension, and in which being unable to predict events has become the norm. Pandemics and wars impose barriers on us that make it difficult to achieve our development goals.

In this context, Latin America is facing three major challenges:

1. The need for a prompt economic recovery;
2. The importance of having more inclusive development models that generate favorable conditions for the participation of all in the economy, independence of gender, race, size of undertakings, and geographic location.
3. Ensuring the stability of the political systems and strengthening them.

In the digital private sector we are convinced, and it is something we are sure you agree with, that digital development is a central component for making progress on these three objectives.

1. The digital economy is allowing for rapid economic growth, generating tens of thousands of jobs in the region, and attracting record investment from outside Latin America.
2. Digital development has allowed for much greater inclusion in the economy, giving many more opportunities to the MSMEs, who are fundamental players in the Latin American economy, to persons far from the main metropolitan areas and from communities with different cultural backgrounds. The digital economy is giving an opportunity to women, youth, and indigenous communities as never before.

Finally, allow me to highlight the opportunity we have to use digital tools as a fundamental factor for generating citizenship and improving the quality of the public debate, and for all to better exercise their human rights. We have to stop seeing digital development as a problem and see it as a great opportunity.

Along with representatives of the digital private sector of the Americas, we have consolidated a set of recommendations through the Americas Business Dialogue (ABD), which from our point of view would generate adequate conditions for moving in the right direction.

Allow me to now review just some of these proposals:

1. We need more innovative approaches from the technological, policy, and regulatory perspectives, to provide quality connectivity to the region's entire population. Quality connectivity is a *sine qua non* for all the population in the Americas to have access to opportunities for education, employment, public services, health services, recreation, and the exercise of citizenship. The digital divide is a gap in opportunities. There is no technology or business model which, by itself, is going to resolve all the problems. We have to intelligently combine all options available to us: 4G, 5G, community networks, fiber optics, and satellite access.
2. We need public policies generally, especially sectoral policies, to be compatible with the key objectives of digital development. Public policies should enable digital development; it should be a catalyst, and not constitute barriers. The consistency of public policies and their alignment with the key objectives is perhaps one of the main challenges in our region.
3. The multistakeholder model of policy development is fundamental for producing better policies, and in appropriate time frames. Efficiency in the development of policies is

essential for accelerating the positive effects of digital development. To that end we need to involve all interested actors from the outset of the negotiations. This is an element that is important to include meaningfully in the political commitments of the Summit.

4. Digital financial inclusion and universal access to digital payment methods is key for inclusive growth of the economy. Digital financial services are a basic requirement for the successful participation of individuals and MSMEs in the digital economy – together with massive plans for training MSMEs to contribute to their successful performance in the digital environment.
5. Finally, we call for increased regional cooperation regarding digital policies and integration of the digital economy. We have much to gain and nothing to lose. We should include components enabling the development of the digital economy in trade and integration agreements to achieve faster digital development throughout the region and so that the digital trade in goods and services, both nationally and across borders, may become a reality in Latin America for the benefit of all.

Esteemed representatives of the countries of the Americas, we know that you have a tough and complex job ahead, but we also see a great opportunity to lay the groundwork for economic recovery and more inclusive models of human, social, and economic development in the Americas.

You can count on the full collaboration of the digital private sector in Latin America. And just as, thanks to the IDB, we have already had the opportunity to contribute through the ABD platform, rest assured that we will always be ready to add our effort to this challenging yet stimulating undertaking.