

Statement of Philip L. Verveer
Nominee for United States Coordinator for International Communications
and Information Policy

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

June 25, 2009

Chairman Shaheen and members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy in the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs.

I would like to begin by thanking President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the honor of being nominated and for the privilege inherent in the opportunity to serve as a representative of the United States.

I also would like to thank my family. My debt to them is incalculable. I am very fortunate that my son Michael and my daughters Alexandra and Elaina all have engaged in public service in one form or another. I also am pleased that Alexandra, my son-in-law Dominic Bianchi, and my granddaughters Leigh and Evan Bianchi are here today. My other children and my 93-year-old mother are not able to attend today's hearing, but they will be watching it on the Committee's web site. Most especially, I want to thank my wife Melanne. She is not able to be here today because she is in Afghanistan on State Department business. The Senate recently confirmed her as Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's issues. It is a great and, if I may say, well-deserved honor that has been the source of enormous gratification to our entire family.

I have spent the last thirty-five years in government service and private law practice addressing the law and policy affecting communications and, to a lesser extent, information services. If I am confirmed by the Senate, I will join a very capable group of Civil Service and Foreign Service Officers who have attended to our nation's interests in communications and information policy very successfully over the years. I hope that the experiences of my professional lifetime will contribute to their continued success.

Cooperation among nations and among private actors is essential to international communications, an obvious insight that led to the creation of the International Telecommunication Union in the nineteenth century. Issues of inter-operating requirements and technical standards are critical. These traditional "supply-side" issues increasingly have been joined in the international arena by

“demand-side” issues related to consumption of communications and information services. For example, the ITU pursues a development agenda in addition to its more traditional concerns.

The requirement to find cooperative mechanisms to enable the efficient provision and consumption of communications and information internationally would account for the existence of a communications and information policy function within the State Department. The significance of communications and information to the world’s economies and to the discourse among the world’s peoples reinforces the function’s importance as a foreign policy matter.

Information and communications technology (ICT) has had a transformative (and disruptive) effect on the world’s economies and will continue to do so. The United States and our friends around the world have a large and legitimate stake in the ways in which the technology is deployed. In the context of the present global economic difficulties, we have a special interest in avoiding and removing barriers to deployments and uses of information and communications technologies that offer opportunities for economic revival.

The Office of the U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy (CIP) is one of seven issue-based organizations within the Bureau of Energy, Economic and Business Affairs. Its historic mission has been the advocacy of policies for expanded access to information and communications technologies and services, improved efficiency in the worldwide ICT and telecommunications market, and fair opportunities for U.S. companies to participate in this important sector around the globe. In supporting these policy objectives, the Department of State has sought to empower people by giving them fuller access to educational opportunities, information resources and forums for exchange of ideas. This access is more critical now than ever.

President Obama speaking recently in Strasbourg said that “we’ve arrived at a moment where each nation and every citizen must choose at last how we respond to a world that has grown smaller and more connected than at any time in its existence.” He went on to speak of our age when he said that “we’ve known for a long time that the revolutions in communications and technology that took place in the 20th century would help hold out enormous promise for the 21st century. The promise of broad prosperity and mobility, of new breakthroughs and discoveries that could help us lead richer and fuller lives.” An efficient global telecommunications structure creates a healthy environment for U.S. companies doing business in all sectors and, more importantly, it ultimately improves the standard of living at home and abroad.

The revolutions of which the President spoke are forcing changes in the public and private institutions that previously governed the production and consumption of communications and information. This circumstance makes consultation with all interested parties, and especially with this Committee, an imperative that I pledge to observe.

As you are aware, the position of U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy is unusual in that, as a result of your determination, the official assigned the responsibility carries the rank of Ambassador. It is a great honor to be considered for the position. Madam Chairwoman, if I am confirmed, I will make every effort to meet the important responsibilities that have been assigned to the U.S. Coordinator and to vindicate the confidence that the President, the Secretary, and this Committee have shown in me. Thank you.