TOWARDS A TRULY GLOBAL SOCIETY

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This landmark event, the First International Conference on Semantic E-business and Enterprise Computing, bring two fields of imminent importance together. Two trends which as we can see are about to become industry standards in the future global market. Internet has become a dominant force in our lives. It has changed the way we learn, communicate, do business, especially for the younger generation the way we spend our free time, etc. In other words it not only has already made an impact on industry and education but on our social life and culture as well. Irrespective of the industry and the size of the organisation, e-business has become an essential part of the business model in most of the organisations. Globalisation has enforced on us the need for Enterprise computing. For successful e-business seamless interoperability among the systems is essential. Semantic web services have proven to have the capability in achieving this.

I would like to share with you some of my major concerns with globalisation and hope that you will go away with some of those concerns resounding in your heads and work towards finding solutions to some of them.

In 2000, Michael Nelson [1], then director of Internet Technology and strategy at IBM, described the 'next generation internet' as fast (broadband, faster servers, faster software, faster access), reliable, scalable, continually connected, it will be everywhere, natural, easy, intelligent, and trusted. If this is the future of Internet, are we there yet?

Today wherever you turn, you hear the word, 'globalisation' and the Internet is upheld as the major driver behind globalisation. What do the stakeholders: the consumers, researchers, and industrialists expect from a globalised society? I express my perception of globalisation through 4 Cs: **C**o-opetition, **C**o-operation, **C**omplementors, and **C**ompetition.

It is a general consensus today that information technology has had an enormous impact on society and culture. I believe that to achieve true globalisation we need to radically change the way we think, the way we behave and most importantly the way we compete. Developed nations and leading companies need to get behind the wheels of this difficult and long journey towards a truly global society. Although some great research has been carried out by academics the major technological breakthroughs and their applications have mostly been driven by the industry. Therefore, I believe the industry can make a huge impact by changing their mindset and the nature of competition and cooperation.

It was exactly a decade ago, in 1998, at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference when it was recognised that "*the gap between information "haves" and "have nots" was increasing while at the same time telecommunications were playing an increasingly important role at the political, economic, social and cultural level*" [2]. The UNESCO website reports that in 2002, Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the ITU told the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, "*If we do not take any action. The gap between the information 'haves' and 'have nots' will continue to grow*." Recent research [3] stress the importance of taking these actions sooner than later. Although we have made some in roads into reducing the gap we are no near in achieving the desirable solution. How can we use technology to bridge the divide and facilitate the inclusion of the developing world into this global integration? Should such strategies be embedded into our corporate social responsibilities?

The US Presidential candidate Barack Obama in July 2008 said in his foreign policy speech [4], ".. *as President, I will make the case to the American people that it can be our best investment in increasing the common security of the entire world….. to join with friends and partners to lead the world anew*". We have the technologies to day in our hands, we need to find better ways of using them, not for just the betterment of one company or a few societies, or even a smaller portion of one society, but to make global changes where every individual who wants to participate in the e-society has the choice to do so.

References

[1] Michael R Nelson, 'The next generation Internet, e-business, and e-everything', 25th Anniversary AAS colloquium of Science and Technology Policy, held 11th – 13th April, 2000 in Washington DC.

[2] Global Strategy for the Information Society Takes Successful First Steps, at Unesco.org: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2843&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[3] Maha Mohamed Saleh and Elli Georgiadou, 'FIAIFM: A Model Towards Bridging The Digital Divide', Proceedings of the IADIS e-Society Conference, April 9-12, 2008, Portugal, pp 35- 46.

[4] Barack Obama, 'Obama's foreign policy speech', Wednesday July 16, 2008, guardian.co.uk,at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/16/uselections2008.barackobama?gusrc=rss&feed=worldnews