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Open RAN Policy Coalition

Spectrum and National Security

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Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee

Chairwoman Cantwell, Senator Cruz, and Members of the Committee, my name is Diane Rinaldo, and I am the Executive Director of the Open RAN Policy Coalition. On behalf of the Coalition, I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the transformational role of open and interoperable solutions in Radio Access Networks (what is commonly known as 'Open RAN'), particularly as we navigate the implementation of 5G technology and prepare for 6G and beyond.

My goal today is to paint a picture of American innovation, regained opportunity, and economic alternatives, but none of this could happen without the lifeblood of our business, spectrum. Put simply, we cannot deploy more Open RAN and reap its supply chain security benefits unless we have a sufficient amount of licensed spectrum—the Gs and Open RAN run on licensed--in the pipeline. Right now, we do not, and this Committee can play a central role in addressing that shortfall.

Launch of the Coalition

Founded in 2020, the Open RAN Policy Coalition promotes policies to drive the adoption of open and interoperable solutions in RAN. Our coalition represents a diverse group of communication and technology companies unified under a common goal: dismantling technological and market barriers to cultivate a competitive, secure, and resilient wireless market. Our members include carriers, vendors, cybersecurity and cloud service providers, innovators, startups, and established technology companies, all committed to the collective health of the competitive and diverse mobile ecosystem. This initiative transcends technological advancement; it represents a strategic shift towards fostering innovation, stimulating competition, and broadening the supply chain for next-generation wireless technologies, including 5G.

The deployment of advanced mobile networks like 5G is at a pivotal moment, not only for technology policy but for economic security and global connectivity. Open RAN is at the heart of this transformation, influencing how we approach economic and security challenges. A robust and diverse supply chain is critical, and international cooperation on wireless technology is now more vital than ever.

Since launching the Coalition, Open RAN has seen tremendous growth, with more than 100 global deployments. It has achieved its initial goal of providing additional vendor choice for mobile operations; however, our story is far from complete, and more work must be done.

Global Challenges

The undeniable truth is that we face global challenges in maintaining our competitive edge. The Chinese Communist Party's Belt and Road initiative and Digital Silk Road, with more than 150 participating countries, is a CCP strategic security initiative based on prioritized networking deployments. Beijing's "national champions" such as Huawei and ZTE are competing against U.S. and other free market-based companies at a significant advantage, enjoying the full financial backing of the Chinese Communist Party and with the strategic intent of creating vendor lock-in. While Open RAN reduces

costs in hardware and software and creates the possibility of breaking vendor lock-in, these heavy foreign investments tip the scales more than those cost savings can ever compete with.

My experiences in various roles, including on the House Intelligence Committee and as the head of the NTIA, have highlighted the persistent issue of developing nations' financial constraints, which make them susceptible to predatory moves by malign actors, such as the CCP. To close that funding gap, we must simplify and expedite the processes for our companies to compete effectively on what is an artificially uneven playing field. Globally harmonized spectrum for trusted suppliers provides one important element to do just that.

The Coalition's global engagement spans over 80 countries, promoting open and interoperable telecommunications standards. This presence not only enhances connectivity and economic growth but also strengthens international relations. The Coalition's efforts in bridging the digital divide in underserved regions exemplifies our commitment to global leadership and technological advancement. We work with governments around the world at each stage of adoption. Regardless of the starting point, our work will drive governments upwards on the adoption curve, catalyzing private sector activity.

Today, among its many engagements, the Coalition is focused on working with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and was tasked in September 2021 by its four members—Australia, Japan, India, and the United States—work toward synchronizing allied Open RAN development efforts. Since our first project, we have expanded that mission to include other important and like-minded countries. In 2024, we are expanding further to include support of the new Global Coalition on Telecommunications (GCOT), which includes the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Japan, and the United States, which will become the broadest governmental coalition to date.[1]

The journey of the Open RAN movement is a testament to innovation and opportunity based on robust competition in diverse markets. Conceptually and technically, this is the opposite of the CCP's command and control approach to supporting its "national champions." To maintain momentum, we must adopt a holistic approach to countering global market distortions and developing competitive parity for U.S. and allied vendors. The Coalition seeks not to reinvent the wheel but to ease the path forward, ensuring the continued evolution and success of the telecommunications industry.

Where we are today:

Today, most of the Coalition's work has been focused on international efforts. As developing nations look to deploy 5G, Open RAN is a viable and desirable option, offering a cost-effective and adaptable solution. And while our education mission at the

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[1] https://www.ntia.gov/press-release/2023/statement-assistant-secretary-davidson-global-coalition-telecommunications

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Coalition is incredibly important to bring heightened awareness to international partners, Coalition members are eager to deploy in the United States. Unfortunately, additional movement in the U.S. has been handicapped due to the expiration of spectrum auction authority. With no new bands in the pipeline for future deployments, Open RAN has limited opportunities to grow further in the United States.

Furthermore, the FCC's "Rip and Replace" program is stalled due to a lack of funding. The passage of the *Secure Equipment Act* in 2021 deemed Huawei and ZTE a national security threat, yet it still litters our networks. Huawei continues to service U.S. network functions, including software updates in rural communities. If additional funding is not forthcoming, we must develop a Plan B. Open RAN was a nascent concept when the FCC catalog was drafted three years ago; with the deployment of more than 100 networks, Open RAN is now a viable option and our nation's rural carriers deserve more options.

The Coalition continues to have productive conversations with the Department of Defense, specifically the Future G and 5G Cross-Functional Teams offices. DoD's use of commercially viable and available products stimulates the ecosystem while leveraging the best industry has to offer. Most recently, the Naval Air Station at Whidbey Island issued a contract to build a standalone 5G network. This project includes several members, including DISH Wireless, Cisco, JMA Wireless, and Intel. These partnerships build trust and are crucial to the security and resiliency of networks.

The Good News Story

Last December, the Wall Street Journal wrote that *Huawei Expects 9% Revenue Growth,* with their Chairman claiming they are back to "business as usual." I know this article gave a lot of people heartburn.

I'm here today to tell you we are your good news story. Coalition members over the past year:

- Nvidia 262%
- AMD 115%
- Broadcom 100%
- Microsoft 63%
- DISH deployed the world's largest Open RAN to date
- AT&T invested $14 billion dollar in Open RAN
- Newcomers JMA Wireless, Cohere Technologies, and DeepSig are leading in private networks, spectral efficiencies, and artificial intelligence
- 127 companies in 21 countries are now participating in the Open RAN ecosystem

Continued success is not a given. I implore this Committee to reauthorize spectrum auction authority that will give us the indispensable resource that we need to compete. The geopolitical battle for secure networks will not be won between governments; it can

only be won by market forces. Give us the tools we need to win at 3GPP. We hold the strategic advantage, but we can't do this without you.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.