

## **Silicon Flatirons**

### **“Reflections on Satellite Communications”**

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#### **Mindel De La Torre: Opening Address**

Mindel De La Torre, Chief of the International Bureau of the Federal Communication Commission, opened the afternoon with a short history of commercial satellites' role in the world's development. She highlighted success stories such as the Global Positioning System, which now boasts 77 million location-based service users. At present, she noted, the satellite industry employs over 243,000 people and INSERT PROFIT/VALUE. De La Torre also noted the diversity of the satellite entertainment industry, with its 150 million worldwide subscribers, 20 million satellite radio subscribers, and 1.2 million broadband subscribers.

#### **An International Perspective on the Role of Satellite Communications Panel**

Five experts in the field took their respective places at the table to discuss satellite communication's role in the world outside the United States. The discussion centered on broadband-over-satellite and its future. Noting the obvious latency advantages of landlines over 22,000-mile-high satellites, the panel concluded that satellites are best used for (1) non-instant communication, and (2) spreading the internet to the parts of the world broadband internet has yet to penetrate. The panel discussed various regions and their outlook for satellite-based broadband, including Europe's disparate regulatory schemes, Mexico's nascent broadband market, South America's hodgepodge of parochial satellite providers, and the ripeness of the Southeast Asian archipelago for satellite broadband service.

#### **The Role of Satellite Communications in Broadband Internet Access Panel**

The afternoon's second panel was a discussion of satellite broadband's future in America. The panel first discussed the current layout of landline-based broadband coverage in the US, noting that scattered gaps in broadband coverage still exist (in more than just rural areas). The panel then discussed the most crucial factor in broadband dissemination—market pressure. Hyperlocal, homebrew broadband was part of that discussion, spurred by Matt Larsen, founder and CEO of Vistabeam, itself a homebrew internet provider. The discussion then turned to the expansion of broadband through local providers, the “carrier of last resort” principle of paying providers to expand into non-marketworthy territory. The panel then opened up to questions, where it discussed satellite latency, the deployment of fiber optic lines closer to the end user.

## **Satellite Communications and Spectrum Management Panel**

In a turn toward policy, the evening's third panel discussed the looming prospect of spectrum management, with the promise from moderator Pierre de Vries to be "provocative" and simple, invoking the "no three-letter-acronym" rule. Mark Ellison, a partner at Patton Boggs, LLP, kicked things off with a short history of satellite television, explaining that the increased demand-per-custom for broadband internet, channel selection, and peripheral technologies is pushing against the limits of the broadcast spectrum. Michael Senkowski then discussed Mobile Satellite Service (MSS), Big Low Earth Orbit (BigLEO) satellite systems, and their application to disaster response systems and machine-to-machine data transmission. Henry Goldberg, partner at Goldberg, Godles, Wiener, and Wright, and legal counsel to Lightsquared, discussed the marriage of MSS-terrestrial broadband. Finally, Gerry Salemme, Chief Strategy Officer for Pendrell, spoke of satellite's inability to keep up with the terrestrial broadband providers and the markets they both pursue. He used this phenomenon to drive his call for a reduced spectrum space for satellite communication.

## **CEO Panel**

Charles Ergen and Jay Monroe finished the evening by speaking about their respective experiences in the satellite television and mid-speed mobile broadband industries. Jay's company, Globalstar, is on a mission to bring voice access to the 80% of the world still untouched by wireless signal. The men discussed how, when doling out spectrum space, satellite communication deserves different treatment because of its special nature; weighed in on the Lightsquared controversy, and offered stories of their best business successes and worst mistakes.