Clinton Keynote Stresses Cooperation

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Former President Bill Clinton's Day Three keynote might have been just what the doctor ordered for a wireless industry that can at times seem like war zone. While the OEMs fight it out in court rooms around the globe over patents, the carriers are at each other's throats over just about any deal that comes across the table.

Clinton's message to the packed Nouvelle Ballroom in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center proved simple, high-level, neither red nor blue, and ultimately universal. He preached acceptance of differences, with an emphasis on eventual cooperation amongst government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

"If we adopt a way of saying, 'We want partisan differences. We want differences of opinon. But our goal is creative cooperation,' we're going to be fine," Clinton said.

Since his stint in office (1992-2000), Clinton has honed his skills as a mediator. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, he and former President George H. W. Bush helped raise money to rebuild the city of New Orleans. He's also been heavily involved in helping recovery efforts in Haiti, following the massive earthquake there, as well as in Indonesia after the Tsunami.

On a broad scale, Clinton said that the global economy is too unstable, too unequal, and unsustainable. However, he applauded the wireless industry for working together to create a technology that facilitates the kind of cooperation that will eventually lead to solving those problems.

He cited specific examples of a number of wireless companies around the globe that are working in areas such as mHealth and mobile payments to improve the lives of those living in poorer regions of the globe. Ericsson's work with the United Nations and Refugees United is one such case.

"Less than two percent of people in Africa have access to a computer today, but 45 percent of them already have cellphones," Clinton said, noting that thousands of families in conflict areas have been reunited through Ericsson's initiative.

Inevitably every example returned to that message of cooperation. "If you think about it, the business you're in created more new networks of knowledge and communication than any new develoment in the history of the modern world," Clinton told the audience.

It's perhaps the perfect message upon which to end a week of networking here in New Orleans at CTIA Wireless 2012. Cooperation was a necessity in nearly every past acheivement claimed by this industry and given the challenges ahead it will be no less necessary moving forward.

Source URL (retrieved on *05/22/2013 - 11:00pm*):
http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2012/05/clinton-keynote-stresses-cooperation