

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4606

October 4, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I am writing to urge you to bolster the administration's efforts to coordinate U.S. technology strategies with democratic partners and allies. As seen with 5G telecommunications and semiconductors, authoritarian governments seek to undercut U.S. leadership and dominate strategic and emerging technologies, frequently using them to advance anti-democratic objectives domestically and globally. The upcoming ministerial for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offers an important opportunity to build upon the OECD's existing work on standards for emerging technologies and to advance additional norms and practices related to technology policy alongside countries whose democratic values we share.

In the face of this rising threat from authoritarian governments, I have pushed for cooperation on technology policy with democracies through the creation of an International Democracy Technology Partnership. In May 2021, as you know, the U.S. Senate also passed the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, which, among other measures, included an International Technology Security and Innovation Fund to advance these efforts.

Your recent establishment of the U.S.-E.U. Trade and Technology Council, as well as the inclusion of technology issues within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue structure with Japan, India and Australia and the AUKUS agreement – a security pact with Australia and the United Kingdom – are important steps in ensuring closer alignment around the development and deployment of strategic technologies and the accompanying policies and standards. However, we must do more to utilize existing international fora and a broader set of international partners as part of a well-resourced technology diplomacy strategy.

The OECD, an economic grouping largely made up of likeminded democratic countries, provides a forum for collaboration on rules and norms across a set of emerging technology issues in the face of growing challenges from authoritarian governments. In particular, the world is witnessing the People's Republic of China's efforts to dominate next generation and cutting edge technologies through a variety of tactics. For example, it works to influence standard setting bodies and multilateral bodies and organizations, subsidizes the participation by domestic firms in standardization efforts, provides government-directed funds and subsidies to strengthen Chinese companies, and supports exports by preferred domestic firms through the government's Belt and Road Initiative.

The PRC government's push for the adoption of Huawei technology and Huawei-led standards for 5G has been the most prominent example of this trend. The PRC's national champion, Huawei, strives to export 5G networking equipment globally, along with its standards. Many countries have woken up to the economic and security risks of having a PRC-linked entity provide the telecommunications infrastructure for their citizens and the risks of PRC access to the security and integrity of their citizens' data and communications. These risks extend to other next-generation technologies that rely on, and transmit, sensitive data and communications.

Moreover, authoritarian governments are working to embed anti-democratic values into the standards and norms surrounding these technologies. We have seen this practice most acutely with artificial intelligence-related and facial recognition technology, as the PRC government is using these new technologies to facilitate massive surveillance and social control of its citizens, most prominently in Xinjiang. In addition, a number of governments are building – and exporting – integrated systems that rely on these technologies to conduct large-scale surveillance and censor speech. Efforts by the PRC and Russian governments to institute robust, scalable and impenetrable firewalls, preventing the free flow of ideas and commerce across the internet, have become the envy of other authoritarian leaders across the world.

The OECD has a strong record of coordinating standards and best practices related to technologies such as AI, wireless communications, semiconductors and bio-technology. For example, the OECD recommended principles and guidelines for AI in 2019, and established an AI Policy Observatory in February 2020 for governments to share best practices in AI policy. It also released a report in May 2021, entitled, Standard-Setting Review: Five-Year Report (2016-2021), which reviewed existing OECD legal instruments and made recommendations on how to improve the OECD's standard-setting activity. It has also provided important research and guidance on the PRC government's guidance funds and state subsidies in the semiconductor supply chain.

I urge you to use the OECD's upcoming ministerial meeting on October 5-6, 2021 to work to establish rules and norms around strategic technology issues, including development and governance strategies and best practices for communications applications, AI-enabled products and services, next-generation networks, Internet of Things devices, blockchain and fintech products, and renewable energies.

These technologies and their associated standards and norms are being developed now across various markets and international standards-setting organizations, with immediate repercussions for the economic competitiveness and national security of democratic nations. I urge you to leverage multilateral frameworks such as the OECD to advance coordination and establish norms surrounding these technology areas in concert with our likeminded allies and partners.

I stand ready to support these efforts in Congress.

Sincerely,



MARK R. WARNER  
United States Senator