



International Centre for Free and Open Source Software
VII Floor, Thejaswini, Technopark
Trivandrum - 695581, Kerala, India
Tel: +91 471 2700013

**“Need for a new Legal Framework
for an Equitable Knowledge Society”**

4 September 2012
Kuala Lumpur

The international community should consider creating a new techno-legal framework in order to address the challenges posed by new technology in society, says Satish Babu, President of the South East Asian Regional Computer Confederation (SEARCC) and the national President of the Computer Society of India (CSI).

Addressing the delegates at the Global Conference on Computing Ethics 2012 at Kuala Lumpur, Satish Babu said that much of the conflict that we see today between the primary stakeholders of the Knowledge Society—States, Civil Society and Business—are based on our attempts to use legal frameworks created in 19th and 20th centuries for addressing governance of technologies of the 21st century.

As humanity overcomes the Digital Divide and moves into a realm of Digital Inclusion, and as some sections of civil society—such as the youth and the marginalized—adopt these technologies extensively, attempts to govern them using antiquated or inappropriate legal frameworks would likely result in escalation of conflict.

He said that addressing these challenges may require an out-of-the-box, forward-looking framework that takes into account the potential of these technologies as well as the profile and aspirations of its users.

He drew a parallel with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, which was a declaration without precedent, and which took a bold and unconventional position on rights as inherent for every human being. The UDHR significantly impacted the course of history after its adoption, and the language of rights is today universally understood.

While ethically superior models—such as Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) for the creation, modification, ownership, and distribution of software—were available for some of the technological

challenges, similar models were not presently available for general governance of technology.

He said that a fresh look at the scope, complexity and potential of these emerging technologies would be necessary for the creation of a new framework that would reduce conflict and harmonize the responsibilities and rights of different stakeholders. Such an inclusive approach would be necessary for the establishment of an equitable and just Knowledge Society.

Satish Babu is the Director of the International Centre for Free and Open Source Software (ICFOSS), an autonomous organization under the Government of Kerala, India; the President of the Computer Society of India; and the President of the South-East Asian Regional Computer Confederation. The Global Conference on Computing Ethics 2012 was organized by the Malaysian National Computer Society in association with the Government of Malaysia.



Illustration 1: Satish Babu addressing the Global Conference at Kuala Lumpur on 4 Sep 2012