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February 27, 2019

Director Dan Coats
Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Director Coats:

We are writing to request an unclassified report on the participation of China and other adversarial nations in the international standard setting bodies (“ISSBs”)¹ for fifth-generation wireless telecommunications technologies (“5G”). Over the past year, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (“SSCI”) has heard anecdotal concerns that China is attempting to exert pressure or political influence in the ISSBs, which have historically functioned as technological meritocracies. Not only does political influence undermine fair competition, it also raises serious economic and security concerns for 5G and future generations of wireless technologies.

Currently, U.S. companies do not have access to critical information about the nature of this threat, and the degree of state-directed coordination amongst large Chinese telecommunication firms seeking to gain a critical edge in wireless technologies. Without adequate information, U.S. companies cannot effectively push back against this behavior, nor can the United States coordinate with our allies to deter anticompetitive practices in the ISSBs.

Specifically, we request a detailed and unclassified report, to the extent possible, from the Intelligence Community (“IC”) on the following items:

1. Overall trends in the ISSBs over the past decade and the implications of politicization of ISSBs, if there is evidence of such trends;

¹ The ISSBs include the International Telecommunications Union (“ITU”), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (“IEEE”), and 3rd Generation Partnership Project (“3GPP”), among others.

2. Specific examples and case studies of attempts by China and other foreign adversaries to exert pressure or political influence within the ISSBs or at major telecommunication conferences to secure standards that are favorable to Chinese companies and patent holders, or that might introduce deficiencies into 5G networks; and,
3. Implications of Chinese-led standards for 5G technologies and how that will affect U.S. economic and security interests, including efforts by U.S. companies to sell and scale its technologies, the ability of the U.S. to position itself for future generations of wireless technology, and to protect against cyber intrusions and security vulnerabilities.

In 2012, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence's study on Huawei and ZTE drew attention globally to the security concerns associated with certain Chinese telecommunication and information technology companies. Similarly, we believe Chinese influence in our ISSBs is not fully appreciated, and the IC can play an essential role in filling the publicly available information gap—a necessary first step to countering this trend.

We hope that this report will be part of an ongoing effort to share more timely and relevant information with U.S. companies and our allies. The U.S. cannot tackle this issue alone and must work closely with our international partners—including the European Union, Great Britain, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—on how we may collectively strengthen security standards, supply chain management, and market share of critical technologies. To the greatest extent possible, we urge the IC to declassify relevant information.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
Vice Chairman



Marco A. Rubio
U.S. Senator

CC: Secretary Michael Pompeo