

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, welcome to Dublin, the most exciting place on the planet today for building the businesses of tomorrow.

It's my great honour to be here with you to ring the opening bell for the NASDAQ during Europe's biggest and best tech conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paddy Cosgrave and all his team for making this truly unique event happen and also to welcome Nelson Griggs and Bruce Aust, from NASDAQ.

This is a first for Ireland. Ringing the NASDAQ bell from Dublin is symbolic of Ireland's prime position as a hub of digital enterprise and innovation.

In recent years we have become a global magnet for tech start-ups.

Our own Digital Docklands here in Dublin is host to some of the world's most exciting tech incubators sitting alongside the global giants of internet commerce.

You could call it an ecosystem but that doesn't do justice to the scale of activity happening right across Ireland today.

Countless numbers of new tech companies are being launched.

Thousands of skilled workers are flocking to Dublin and Ireland to leave their mark on the next wave of digital innovation.

This melting pot of ideas and people is changing the world before our very eyes.

Just look around you today – and you will see the reasons why Ireland is an exciting place for new tech businesses.

This Arena is full of energy the energy of Ireland's young, skilled and passionate people.

Our culture embraces change new challenge it injects life into business.

Ireland is proud to be recognised as one of the best small countries in the world for business.

We are the most open economy in the western world.

We celebrate our pro-business environment.

We support world-class Research and Development with a competitive and transparent corporate tax rate.

Investment into Ireland is now at record levels. Business believes in Ireland and recognises the huge opportunities that are here.

I have personally welcomed and announced the details of expansions into Ireland by former Web Summit attendees such as Qualtrics and Squarespace.

For those of you who are interested in following their footsteps I'm giving you my pledge today that this Government will give you all the assistance we can to help you relocate into Europe's most exciting tech city.

To conclude I'll share the prediction of the well-known economist Paul Krugman who in 1998 said that "By 2005 or so, it will become clear that the Internet's impact on the economy has been no greater than the fax machine".

Which just goes to show that making predictions about the future in the age of Google is a dangerous business.

While I won't repeat the folly of predicting the future of the internet I am willing to bet that a large part of that future will be shaped here in Ireland.

And as such I am honoured to now open the NASDAQ, the leading public market for tech companies in the world.

Thank you.