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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**WRITTEN MESSAGE TO THE GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT OF THE
16th INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM
Katowice, 6-10 December 2021**

I send my warmest wishes to all participants in the Internet Governance Forum 2021 Youth Summit.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted both the potential and the challenges of technology. As more and more aspects of our lives move online, we must make sure that the Internet is an open, free, and secure space for everyone.

That requires clear rules that guarantee our human rights and freedoms, give us control over our personal data, and protect us against hate speech and disinformation. We must ensure diversity in those who create and develop new technology. And we need to address widespread concerns about giving huge corporations extraordinary control over issues that profoundly affect our lives.

We must also accelerate our efforts to close the digital divide by ensuring that the 3.7 billion people excluded from the digital realm gain access as a matter of urgency.

Ultimately, we need a new Global Digital Compact – a multi-stakeholder agreement between governments, the private sector and civil society, to accelerate connectivity, avoid fragmentation, protect data and ensure digital human rights.

Young people are the designers of this digital future. You must participate fully in shaping an Internet that is a force for good. Thank you for standing up for an open, free and fair digital future.

The United Nations stands with you, every step of the way.