



MR. LIU ZHENMIN
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Opening Remarks
Opening Session of 16th Internet Governance Forum

Kawotice, Poland, 7 December 2021

Your Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of Poland,
Your Excellency Mr. Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland,
Your Excellency Mr. Marcin Krupa, Mayor of Katowice,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, I warmly welcome you to the official opening of the 16th Internet Governance Forum.

Due to a scheduling conflict, the Secretary-General is not able to join us in-person. But we have the honour to hear his address delivered, from the UN headquarters in New York.

[TECHNICAL CREW WILL PLAY THE VIDEO MESSAGE]

Thank you, Secretary-General.

I join the Secretary-General in extending our heartfelt thanks to our Host, the Government of Poland.

The 16th IGF's theme, 'Internet United', is timelier than ever – as we continue to witness how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts our lives.

It has impacted how we live, how we work and how we interact with each other. And how those unconnected are left further behind.

The IGF could deliver its promise for shaping a digital future for the world -- turning the COVID-19 crisis into opportunities. Indeed, this is easier said than done, as global Internet governance is complex. But united, we can succeed, together.

Joining us at this hybrid meeting -- onsite or online, there are over 6,000 registered participants, representing:

- Governments,
- international and intergovernmental organizations,
- civil society,
- academia,
- technical communities and business, engaged in over 200 different sessions focused on the Forum's main issue areas.

From access and connectivity, to socio-economic development, human rights, trust and cooperation, to environment and emerging regulations. I believe there will be insightful exchanges:

- highlighting the promises and perils of the digital space,
- showcasing solutions and approaches, and
- inspiring ways forward to our digital future.

And the way forward should reach those who can make a concrete impact.

The United Nations remains fully committed to working for a better Internet for all, through a strong IGF process.

I look forward to being part of many important exchanges at the Katowice IGF.

I thank you.
