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# Berlin IGF Messages

## Day 1 Opening Sessions

### Opening Ceremony

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized the strong interplay between online and offline environments on the opening day of IGF 2019. Participants walked past a section of the Berlin Wall on the way to the Opening Session, and both the Secretary-General and the Chancellor emphasized the economic and social consequences of that wall on the people who had been separated by it, as well as the opportunities that had been gained after it was torn down in 1989. Guterres noted that not only are physical walls are still being built, but that virtual walls are also now being constructed in the Internet space, with both types of walls having the effect of separating people. Virtual walls, he observed, also have the effect of amplifying digital, social and political divides. Guterres argued that the only way to avoid further division is to have one vision and one world, and one Internet.

“If we do not work together to address these divides, we will be remembered as the generation that ruined the early promise of the Internet.”

– UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Chancellor Merkel noted that just as people’s yearning for freedom, connection and a hope for progress had resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall, the same values were behind the vision of the creators of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

“May you be inspired by this location, where 30 years ago, when the Wall fell, it marked the dawn of a new age.”

– German Chancellor Angela Merkel

Both Guterres and Merkel supported the United Nations as the appropriate platform for reshaping global Internet governance to ensure a free, open, and decentralized Internet that is secure and stable and can support development for all. Both reinforced the IGF, a platform for all stakeholders to come together and address pressing policy issues related to the Internet, as the most appropriate forum within the United Nations for advancing and evolving Internet governance norms and frameworks.

## High-Level Sessions

Following the Opening Ceremony with Guterres and Merkel, there were three high-level sessions:

- High Level Session on the Future of Internet Governance
- High Level Session on Inclusion
- High Level Session on SMEs and Internet Governance

Discussions among the eminent panelists in these sessions ranged across a wide range of issues, including the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, the gender digital divide and taxes on Internet-based services.

“I think this notion that once we've dealt with the connectivity, we've actually got Digital Equality in a data environment is not actually correct at all. I think one of the most wicked policy challenges we have is this digital inequality paradox, that as we bring people more online we're increasing inequalities, not only between the connected and unconnected but those people who are passively consuming tiny bits of data and those who are actually prospering and creating businesses doing those sorts of things so we actually we've moved beyond just individuals being able to gain access, make the most of it, put their best foot forward.”

– *Alison Gillwald, Research ICT Africa/University of Cape Town*

Throughout the afternoon, a running theme was how to effectively govern the Internet and digital technologies, given the exponential rate of their adoption and continuing change when compared to previous technological shifts - such as writing and the printing press - that have had global social, economic and political effects.

“The question now is whether Parliaments are capable of keeping up with technological change, and it seems to me that the only way that can work is if the laws that are adopted have a certain degree of abstraction in them so that they are not so rooted in detail and underlying technology that they can't be properly applied to an evolving system.

– *Vint Cerf, Co-developer of TCP/IP*

## **Messages out of Opening Session on IGF 2019 main themes**

### **Security, Safety, Stability and Resilience**

- The answers to whether we become more, or less, secure and safe depends on our ability to work together across disciplines and actors, across nations and political divides.
- Low-intensity cyber-conflict between major States is not a prediction for the future but a feature of the present. In such a climate, mechanisms that build trust and cooperation are indispensable.

### **Digital Inclusion**

- Technical innovations are there to serve people and not the other way around.
- We need to better understand the relationship between digital advances and inequality: inequality and exclusion drive social unrest and conflict; digital technologies can either widen digital, social and economic divides, or be a force to help reduce them.
- Attacks against Internet connectivity have become a dangerous instrument of politics.

### **Data Governance**

- Flows of data and information link up communities, cities, countries and continents, bringing people together beyond traditional barriers established through politics, through religion or social status.
- Artificial Intelligence and algorithms, if not governed effectively, can be used to monitor and manipulate behaviour, to besiege us with ever more targeted and intrusive advertising, to manipulate voters and to stifle freedom of expression.