

## **IGF 2017 Reporting Template**

- Session Title: *"The impact of digitisation on politics, public trust, and democracy"*

- Date: Tuesday, 19 December 2017

- Time: 10am – 1pm

- Session Organizer: OFCOM Switzerland

- Host Chair: Mr. Philipp Metzger, Director General, OFCOM Switzerland

- Moderator: Ms. Nathalie Ducommun, Talk Master, Swiss Television

### **- List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:**

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union

Mr. Noel Curran, Director General, European Broadcasting Union

Ms. Nighat Dad, Executive Director, Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan

Mr. Bobby Duffy, Global Director, Ipsos Social Research Institute

Ms. Farida Dwi Cahyarini, Secretary-General, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Indonesia

Mr. Hossam Elgamal, Chairman, Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC)

Ms. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, European Commission

Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu, Minister of Information, Bangladesh

Ms. Malavika Jayaram, Executive Director, Digital Asia Hub

Mr. Frank La Rue, Assistant Director-General Communication & Information, UNESCO

Ms. Claudia Luciani, Director of Democratic Governance and Anti-discrimination, Council of Europe

Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, International Expert on Human Rights and Media Freedom, Board Member of Access Now

Mr. Gonzalo Navarro, Executive Director, Asociación Latinoamericana de Internet

Ms. Nanjira Sambuli, Digital Equality Advocacy Manager, World Wide Web Foundation

Mr. Sébastien Soriano, Chairman ARCEP (French National Regulatory Authority for Telecoms and Posts), Chairman BEREC (Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications)

Mr. Robert Strayer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Cyber and International Communications and Information Policy, U.S. Department of State

### **- Key Issues raised:**

This session focused on the opportunities and challenges that digitisation brings to the digital political sphere, public trust, and democracy. The main messages were the following:

- Digitisation can empower citizens, strengthen institutions, and promote more inclusive democratic participation and policy making. But it can also lead to information disorder, public mistrust, and the manipulation of public opinion. There was broad support for the idea that we should avoid over-focusing on the risks, and rather put emphasis on maximising the positive aspects of digitisation.

- Trust in public institutions and policy making processes remains a matter of concern, and digitisation can act both as a solution and as a threat. Many emphasised that core principles –

such as accountability, transparency, legitimacy, and openness – are needed to consolidate or restore trust. Digital technologies can help put these principles into practice.

- ‘Fake news’ continues to be in focus, but many noted that the term is confusing, and ‘disinformation’ or ‘misinformation’ could be used instead. While the phenomenon is not new, it now has a wider effect due to digital technologies. There were diverse views on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Some noted that governments are mainly responsible, and should invest in education and media literacy, instead of building new institutions and policies. Governments were called upon to abstain from content regulation and censorship. Some were in favour of intermediary responsibility and the need for regulation in this regard, while others argued that platforms cannot be solely responsible for countering misinformation.
- There was general agreement on the crucial role that education and literacy have in equipping individuals with a critical mind, and the ability to make informed choices and distinguish trustworthy information from misinformation and/or manipulation.
- While acknowledging the importance of education, several other remedies were proposed for addressing the challenges of misinformation in the digital space: strengthening quality journalism, rebalancing the relation between traditional and new media, fact checking, and providing alternative positive stories.
- Finally, it was broadly agreed that multistakeholder cooperation is key in making sure that we, as a society, use the digital space to the best of our abilities. While the digital future is characterised by uncertainties, and facing the unknown is a challenge, relying on long-term principles (such as accountability and transparency) combined with having flexibility in implementing and finding tailor-made solutions to face new challenges would be the most appropriate way forward.

## **Gender Reporting**

- Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session: 300
- Estimate the overall number of women present at the session: 120
- If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women’s empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion:

It was discussed that digitisation enables greater distribution of power, by empowering women to make their voices heard and to participate in the political discourse, with the end objective to ensure that digitisation is enhancing democracy and not creating new divides.