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MESSAGE

**First Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisor Group Meeting
Internet Governance Forum**

Geneva, 14-16 January 2020

Just over a month ago, we gathered in Berlin under the overarching theme: One World. One Net. One Vision.

IGF2019 has left important imprints in the legacy of the Internet Governance Forum.

Not only did we have record numbers in participation and diversity, across different stakeholder groups, countries and disciplines, with capacity development support to the Global South provided for by the host Government; we also convened the inaugural Parliamentary Session.

The focused discussions and outputs of all sessions in 2019 were framed by three important sub-themes: on 1) data governance; 2) digital inclusion; and 3) security, safety, stability and resilience.

Once again, we thank the host, the Government of Germany, for their leadership, collaboration and commitment.

As we turn to 2020, I extend my special appreciation to the Government of Poland, for its offer and undertaking to host the 15th meeting of Internet Governance Forum, to be held in Katowice on 2 to 6 November 2020.

I welcome the 2020 Members of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group of the IGF, and our new MAG Chair, Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen.

To quote the Secretary-General's keynote address at the Berlin IGF: "the Internet can be a powerful force for good, but we are seeing also that it is a tool that can easily be put to nefarious use."

Let us recall his reminder to us about the three divides: digital divides, social divides and political divides, and how digital divides both reflect and reinforce the other two.

And also his advice for us to build the IGF into “a platform where government representatives from all parts of the world – along with companies, technical experts and civil society – can come together to share policy expertise, debate emerging technology issues, agree on some basic common principles, and take these ideas back to appropriate norm-setting fora.”

And in delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the remaining 10 years, the IGF should also step up as a platform in responding to the Secretary-General’s call for a Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

Data and digitalisation are at the heart of developments today – global, national or community level. This reinforces the mandate of the IGF --- to work towards the responsible and effective governance of the Internet and digital technology, for the benefit of all people.

All countries, including the least developed countries and small island developing states, should have equal opportunity to engage in the debate on Internet governance and to facilitate their participation in existing institutions and arrangements.

Ultimately, the involvement of all stakeholders, from developed as well as developing countries, is necessary for the future development of the Internet, the digital world and the digital economy.

I applaud the far-reaching efforts of all current and past MAG Members.

The cohesive, committed and collaborative efforts of the MAG, now building on 14 years of work, are important and critical to the IGF process and fulfilling its mandate.

In our efforts to leave no one behind, there remains a need to strengthen the linkages and engagement of the national, sub-regional, regional and youth IGFs, or NRIs, and develop their capacities. We have made very impressive progress as seen in the positive network effect of the NRIs – but we need to do more.

And I urge you to continue to answer the call of the times, as highlighted by the Secretary-General and Chancellor Angela Merkel, and respond to the mandates of the General Assembly contained in General Assembly resolution 70/125. It is incumbent upon us continue to make improvements to the IGF processes, outputs and desired impacts. This is further reflected in the recommendation of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

To stay focused and effective, I advise you to be guided by the mandate of the IGF, set in the Tunis Agenda, reaffirmed in GA resolution 70/125 and the terms of reference of MAG Members.

Today is the Open Consultation, and that brings me to the need for the IGF to engage with the global community, including intergovernmental and international organizations, think tanks, academic institutions and all individuals, as the Internet is now a central medium in our daily lives, across borders, sectors and disciplines.

The IGF's continued success is contingent on the engagement and recognition of the global community, across stakeholder groups, across disciplines, and across generations - especially the youth.

Indeed, the continuing relevance and strength of the global role of the IGF needs *your* participation – the inclusive participation of the community-at-large, empowered through the MAG and established processes.

We also need to ensure the health of the IGF Trust Funds, and in attracting current and new donors to contribute sufficiently to maintain the lean but optimal level of operations for the day-to-day administration of the IGF Secretariat - but also, importantly, to implement capacity building projects.

I call on the MAG, and on all of us, to work harder to reach out to those countries and stakeholders who are currently not engaged in the IGF. We do this, not only for the benefit of the IGF community, but also to fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in leaving no one behind, and no country behind.

As you can tell from the meeting Agenda, we have important issues to address and agree upon, in order to advance on the preparation of the Katowice IGF.

Let us be inspired by the experience and wisdom we learned and shared in Berlin on “one world, one net, one vision”, and let us work towards “Internet United” – the overarching theme of the IGF in Katowice.

I wish you all a vibrant, successful and outcome-oriented meeting.

Thank you all, and thank you, Madam Chair.
