



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

Opening Remarks

Virtual Briefing to the UN Missions on the 16th Internet Governance Forum

New York (virtual briefing through Microsoft Teams)
5 November 2021, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Ambassador Krzysztof Szczerski, Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations,

Your Excellency Mr. Krzysztof Szubert, Poland's Government Plenipotentiary for the UN IGF 2021,

Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I am honoured to join you today.

Let me start by expressing my deep appreciation to the Government of Poland for convening this briefing and for its leadership and support to the Internet Governance Forum.

The 16th Internet Governance Forum will be held in exactly a month's time – from 6 to 10 December 2021 in Katowice.

I applaud the efforts of Mr. Krzysztof Szubert and of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) Chairperson Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen.

Under their joint leadership, preparations for the 16th meeting of the IGF are well on track.

This year's IGF is forward-looking, with an agenda that is more focused and issue-driven. The Parliamentary Track is gaining traction, to be organized in partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The IGF Youth Summit is also a promising session for youth to voice their concerns and share their views and advice on the future of the Internet.

Under the overarching theme of “Internet United”, there will be over 200 different sessions on the following main topics and cross-cutting issue areas:

1. Economic and Social Inclusion and Human Rights;
2. Universal Access and Meaningful Connectivity
3. Emerging Regulation: Market structure, content, data and consumer rights and protection
4. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
5. Inclusive Internet Governance Ecosystems and Digital Cooperation
6. Trust, Security, and Stability

Indeed, all these issue areas are not only interconnected but are also interlinked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed an unprecedented crisis, causing disruption to SDG progress and making the achievement of many Goals and Targets even more challenging. The devastating impacts of the pandemic have impacted the most vulnerable and left them further behind.

Never in our history has the need for a safe, inclusive digital environment been as evident as now. We must not forget that the Internet – which many of us take for granted - remains inaccessible for millions, especially in developing countries.

At the same time, there are increasing worries on the misuse of digital technologies and platforms to spread misinformation and fake news, to commit cybercrimes, and to put in danger critical infrastructures.

This brings me to the central role of the Internet Governance Forum as a global multistakeholder platform on Internet governance and digitalization – the IGF is essential to our mission of closing all forms of digital divides while addressing the policy issues related to the risks and misuse of the Internet.

In his Report on the Common Agenda, the Secretary-General has called for the IGF to adapt, innovate and reform, to support effective governance of the digital commons and keep pace with rapid, real-world developments.

The Katowice IGF is well positioned to contribute to these objectives and to support digitalization in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Let us work together --- UNITED as a global community, to ensure that the IGF outcomes contribute effectively to multilateral processes on digitalization across the UN system – and fulfilling the vision of this year’s IGF theme of “Internet United”.

We count on the active participation of all UN Member States at the IGF.

And I hope to see you and your colleagues in person, or virtually, in Katowice.

Thank you.
