

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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VIDEO MESSAGE FOR THE OPENING SESSION OF 16th INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

“Internet United”

Katowice, 7 December 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the life-changing power of the Internet.

Digital technology has saved lives by enabling millions of people to work, study and socialise safely online.

But the pandemic has also magnified the digital divide, and the dark side of technology: the lightning-fast spread of misinformation; the manipulation of people’s behaviour; and more.

We can only address these challenges *united*, through strengthened cooperation:

- By establishing clear rules to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- By regaining control over our data;
- By countering disinformation and hate speech;
- And by connecting everyone to the Internet by 2030.

The Internet Governance Forum has a crucial role in shaping the conversation.

The vision of an open, free and secure digital future underpins my Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.

And my recent report on Our Common Agenda proposes a Global Digital Compact, aimed at bringing governments, the private sector and civil society together in support of this vision.

I hope this Forum will create momentum and spur progress.

I urge you to be bold, and I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.