



MS. MARIA-FRANCESCA SPATOLISANO
ASSISTANT-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Closing Remarks
16th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum

10 December 2021, Katowice

His Excellency Mr. Janusz Cieszyński, Secretary of State and Government Plenipotentiary for Cybersecurity,

His Excellency Mr. Krzysztof Szubert, High Representative of the Prime Minister for European Digital Policy and Poland's Plenipotentiary for UN IGF 2021,

Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends – here in Katowice, and online from around the world,

I am pleased to deliver this Closing Statement on behalf of Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. LIU Zhenmin.

Seventy-three years ago today, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As the United Nations Secretary-General highlighted in his message today; the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and the expansion of digital technology into all areas of our lives have created new threats to human rights.

The principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remain the key to realizing all human rights – civil, economic, cultural, social, and political – for all people, everywhere.

The last five days of this Internet Governance Forum have been engaging, inspiring and fruitful.

We have been joined by over 10,300 participants from over 175 countries who have registered online, across all continents of the world.

Over 2,700 participants have joined us here in Katowice.

With over 10,300 registrations, this is yet again another record for the IGF.

There were over 15,000 connections, 50,000 social interactions with the hashtag #IGF2021, with a reach of 5 Million people, and over 20,000 YouTube views following the Katowice IGF sessions.

We are honoured to have been joined by close to 200 Ministers, Parliamentarians and other High-level Leaders from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, United Nations agencies and other international organizations,

Over 140 national, regional, and youth IGF initiatives, or NRIs, contributed to the IGF --- this speaks truly to the localised, inclusive, multi-stakeholder nature of the Internet dialogue.

There are 39 remote hubs that have joined the Forum all week, online, in countries ranging from Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia in the Africa region, to Bolivia, Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela in Latin America, and to Malaysia and India in Asia.

Remote hubs have been a hallmark of the IGF in facilitating this hybrid IGF. They are supported technically by the IGF Secretariat, and among them a handful are also supported financially by the United Nations.

From these impressive participation numbers emerge important action-oriented outcomes of the Katowice IGF, that includes:

- The Katowice IGF Messages
- The IGF 2021 Summary
- The Outcome Document of the IGF Parliamentary Track
- The Global Youth Summit Action Points and Report
- Over 300 insightful session reports

I urge you to especially review the Katowice IGF Messages and give us your valuable feedback and input as part of the distinctive trade-mark of the IGF – the bottom-up inclusive multistakeholder process.

And I urge you to bring these outcomes into actions through your Governments, or your communities, as well as various intergovernmental and international bodies.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The United Nations is extremely grateful to our host -- the Government of Poland.

We thank Poland not only for their hospitality and generosity but also for their strong commitment to the IGF.

It was in 2018 – more than three years ago -- when they first offered to host the IGF in 2020, that was eventually delayed for a year until now.

But that did not stop them from providing full support to the global virtual IGF that was hosted by the United Nations Secretariat last year.

Indeed, the success of this year's 16th Internet Governance Forum is a result of two years of intensive preparatory work. And Poland rose to the challenge of the last few weeks, with unrelenting dedication and commitment, for which the UN is deeply grateful.

I would like to take this opportunity to present letters of appreciation to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, His Excellency Mr. Mateusz Morawiecki, as well as to Minister Mr. Janusz Cieszyński and Minister Mr. Krzysztof Szubert,

May I request Minister Janusz Cieszyński and Minister Mr. Krzysztof Szubert on stage.

We thank the leadership of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. And we certainly cannot thank enough the dedication of Mr. Michał Pukaluk, Director of Digital Policy, and his admirably unflagging, outstanding team.

We also thank all colleagues from the Polish Government who worked with us patiently throughout the last years.

I would be remiss if we do not also recognize well enough the outstanding preparatory work of the 2021 Multistakeholder Advisory Group, under the able guidance of the MAG Chair Anriette Esterhuysen.

The MAG has continued to reinvigorate the IGF with this first-ever fully hybrid IGF, that has stressed the importance of onsite and online participation, and a forward-looking agenda that is more focused and issue-driven.

Let me also thank colleagues from various UN agencies, including the Regional Commissions including ECA, ESCAP, ITU, UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC, FAO, UNIDIR, UNFCCC, World Bank, WIPO and others for their active participation.

I also thank all UN staff from Geneva, Nairobi, New York, Vienna, and Warsaw for security, conference services, news coverage, communication outreach, remote participation and technical infrastructure.

Finally, I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the many donors for their financial support to the Forum, as well as the financial contributions to the United Nations IGF trust fund.

The United Nations count on your continued support. Your commitment to a strengthened IGF will be crucial as we look forward to the next year's meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Most important of all, we would like to THANK YOU - the participants, joining us online or onsite.

For those who are here, you travelled from afar amidst the pandemic's quarantine and travel restrictions.

For those who joined us online, you have dedicated your precious time to join us and engage with these important issues – no matter your timezone.

For all the session organizers, you have worked hard to prepare for your sessions and to prepare your interactions.

And we thank all the young people joining us – you play an important role in shaping today’s and tomorrow’s Internet.

So a big thank you to ALL OF YOU. Without your presence, it would not be possible for us to have a track record of sixteen years of success of the IGF.

*Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the role and use of the Internet and technologies as a global commons.

At the same time, we also witness the persistent and widening divides, the spike in misinformation and hate speech perpetuated through online platforms, as well as rising concerns over cybercrimes, frauds, privacy, security and human rights issues.

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 2.9 billion people, especially in developing countries.

As highlighted in the Secretary-General’s Report on the Common Agenda, the Internet Governance Forum remain as the default global multistakeholder platform on Internet governance and digitalization.

It is essential to fulfilling the IGF’s mission in closing all forms of digital divides while addressing the policy issues related to the protection of human rights, and many potential risks and misuse of the Internet.

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 Secretary-General also calls for a Global Digital Compact and people-centered Internet.

Let us stand UNITED and work together, UNITED as a global community, to ensure that the IGF outcomes contribute effectively to the Global Digital Compact, and multilateral processes on digitalization across the UN system.

I wish you safe travel back to your homes.

I also wish all Happy Holidays as we approach the end of this eventful year. Thank you.
