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Remarks at UN Open Forum
“Connecting the digital dots –
how the UN System is supporting the digital transformation and the way forward?”

Kawotice, Poland, 7 December 2021 at 15:00-16:00 CET

Distinguished Participants
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you today. Thank you for being here, onsite and online.

The United Nations family has increasingly engaged in IGF-related activities, sharing their expertise with multi-stakeholders, while also listening to their views and voices. Such interactions and collaboration continue to be beneficial to all.

Many UN entities have been supporting intergovernmental processes, contributing to international norm setting, and digital cooperation. The voices from the stakeholders can help enrich such contributions.

And other UN entities have carried out analytical work, covering:

- digital government,
- digital economy,
- access to information,
- digital connectivity, and
- cybersecurity.

It is critical that we hear back from our civil society, technical community, and business partners, as well as governments, on how we can further improve our analytical outputs.

Increasingly, many UN organizations have also been scaling up capacity building, helping countries to apply digital technologies to bridge digital divides, improve public service delivery, and develop their digital economies.

We can do a better job if these efforts are undertaken in partnership with stakeholder groups.

Importantly, these collaborative initiatives are now made possible because of the Internet and digital technologies. Virtual meetings, shared document collaboration, and conferences held online, are some of the tools that facilitate such cooperation.

The digital response to the COVID-19 pandemic has really demonstrated the value of digital technologies - but not for all people. Indeed, the advance of digital technologies has exacerbated inequalities in many situations.

We have seen consequences of:

- children not being connected online,
- employees unable to work remotely due to lack of devices or connectivity, and
- social relations at stress because of isolation, just because of one fact: the digital divide and the lack of access and connectivity.

It is incumbent on the UN family to be part of a global undertaking for a better, safer, Internet for all. By being at the IGF, you are indeed doing so.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has laid out clear advice for the IGF to adapt, innovate and reform. The IGF is a good platform for us to exchange our experiences in working on the digital ecosystem, digital policy, and digital capacity building.

I invite you to speak today on what you see as the imperative for the UN Family, to make the Internet a better place for all people on our planet. And, especially, to harness digital transformation for sustainable development.

It is my true wish that this type of gathering becomes our tradition at every year's IGF.

I thank you.
