IGF 2023 High Level Session IV: Access & Innovation for Revitalising the SDGs
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Summary Document

Speakers
Ms. Karoline Edtstadler, Federal Minister for the EU and the Constitution, Austria; Mr. Junhua Li, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; Mr. Tshilidzi Marwala, Rector, United Nations University; Mr. Mohamed Shareef, Minister of State for Environment, Climate and; Technology, Maldives; Mr. Masanori Kondo, Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity; Ms. Lise Fuhr, Director General, European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO); Mr. Kojo Boakye, Vice President, Public Policy, Africa, Middle East, and Turkey, Meta; Ms. Nanako Ishido, Professor, Keio University Graduate School of Media Design; *with contributions from* Mr. Ernesto Rodríguez Hernández, Deputy Minister of Communications, Cuba; Mr. Rodney Taylor, Secretary General, Caribbean; Telecommunication Union (CTU); Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); Mr. Axel van Trotsenburg, Senior Managing Director, World Bank; Ms. Shivanee Thapa, Nepal Television (moderator); and Ms. Jewel Forde, Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (moderator).

Summary
The discussions of the "High Level Panel IV - Access & Innovation for Revitalising the SDGs" centred on the role of digital solutions in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing inclusivity and skills development. The Panel confirmed the potential of digital solutions in accelerating the 2030 Agenda (new technologies such as artificial intelligence, satellite imagery, digital identity, …). Key challenges identified governance of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, lack of digital skills, ethical behaviour in production and use of digital technologies (such as paying attention to e-waste, or data protection, or storage of data across borders and making this clear to owners of data), and access and infrastructure. The discussions also placed significant emphasis on gender equality, advocating for increased participation of women in technology and leadership roles. The panelists voiced concerns regarding the current pace of progress in this area, and urged for increased efforts to narrow the digital divides.

The Panel emphasized inclusivity and accessibility, advocating for digital technologies to be accessible to all regardless of location or abilities, which is only possible with a robust digital infrastructure and widespread digital literacy. One other emphasis of the Panel was on sustainability and environmental stewardship, advocating for the adoption of technologies that minimize their ecological footprint. This requires substantial investments in eco-conscious digital infrastructure and practices. Another critical aspect was the need for multi-stakeholder engagement, encouraging partnerships between governments particularly from the global south, the private sector, academia, and diverse communities. Essential actions include showcasing the significance of digital projects to policymakers and elevating digital literacy levels. Finally, transparency, ethical considerations, and a human rights-based approach are stressed, urging open communication about digital innovations' intentions, capabilities, and potential impact, while ensuring inclusivity and avoiding discrimination. By adhering to these principles and taking these actions, there is a solid foundation for driving meaningful progress towards a sustainable and inclusive digital future.

It is recommended that this session's discussions and outcomes could be considered as inputs for the action-oriented Pact for the Future, to be adopted at the Summit of the Future in 2024, including the Global Digital Compact.