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**Opening Remarks
2nd IGF Open Consultations and MAG Meeting**

New York, 12 July 2016

Ms. Lynn St Amour, Chairperson of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group,
Distinguished Members of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

A warm welcome also to IGF community representatives, who are here with us at these Open Consultations, either in-person or through remote participation.

Indeed, remote participation through webcast and live transcript demonstrates the IGF inclusiveness, which is part of the IGF's mandate established in the Tunis Agenda.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the United Nations commitment to strengthen the multi-stakeholder engagement in internet governance.

In this regard, I would also like to applaud the efforts of the MAG in seeking to increase participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially from the developing countries.

Let me also use this occasion to say a few words about the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, also known as DESA.

DESA is the Secretariat Department at Headquarters with mandates for servicing UN intergovernmental bodies and processes, such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and its functional commissions and expert committees.

Our analytical and capacity building work covers a range of areas, including macroeconomic analysis, financing for development, population dynamics, statistics, public administration, social development, and sustainable development.

DESA also serves as the secretariat for many processes, including, as many of you recall, the General Assembly WSIS+10 review last December.

As a Headquarter-based Secretariat department, DESA is often tasked by the Secretary-General to manage and administer support for a number of initiatives of the Secretary-General, including the internet governance forum, convened by the Secretary-General in response to the mandate of the Tunis Agenda.

One of my predecessors, Mr. Nitin Desai, chaired the MAG meetings in its first phase and helped establish the working modalities of the MAG.

We have helped foster the growth of the IGF in the past ten years and we will continue doing so, together with you, in the next decade.

We embarked on the IGF journey together and we are ready to work with all of you to further strengthen the IGF, while continuing to improve its working modalities, as called for by WSIS+10.

We are aware that the MAG is, by its very nature, a diverse community representing different perspectives.

In my view, this is a key feature of the IGF.

This diversity can also be enriching, as seen in the 260 workshop proposals received for the 2016 IGF, featuring 66 topics.

The theme that the MAG proposed for the 2016 IGF, on “Enabling Inclusive and Sustainable Growth”, is timely and forward-looking.

Last year, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, anchored in 17 universal and inter-connected Sustainable Development Goals and 169 Targets.

As you know, the 2030 Agenda underscores that the Internet and information and communication technologies can play enabling roles in implementing the SDGs and their associated targets.

More specifically, one of the SDG targets calls for efforts to significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

As it happens, the High-Level Political Forum, the central platform for follow-up and review of the SDGs, is taking place here this week and next.

You are welcome to follow the discussion.

It is also timely that a retreat will be held later this week to explore ways to enrich the IGF, as part of the ongoing process in advancing the IGF mandate.

The 2016 IGF marks the first IGF following its 10-year renewal by the General Assembly at the WSIS+10 High Level Event last year.

For the past 10 years, MAG members, together with various stakeholders of the IGF community, have contributed tremendously to the IGF's dialogue process.

Your efforts have made profound impacts on the state of Internet governance today.

We need to think how the IGF can further enhance its role as the global forum for multi-stakeholder policy discussion on public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance.

Here I would like to raise two questions for your consideration during the retreat.

Firstly, how to align the priorities of IGF with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? For the first time in history, humanity realized that our old way of consumption and production is no longer sustainable. It has been a remarkable achievement for the international community to reach consensus on the way forward. Maximizing the role of ICT in the historic journey will undoubtedly have a powerful impact in the implementation process.

Secondly, will we be able to have the early harvest in the field of Internet Governance through IGF platform? Though stakeholders are still quite divided on some sensitive issues, we could start to look for the low-hanging fruit and the problems that are easy to identify and fix. A step-by step approach will help to further build the confidence and enhance the delivery of IGF. In this regard, I encourage all MAG Members and IGF stakeholders to contribute inputs to guide the retreat discussion.

Any idea or suggestion coming out of the retreat will in turn be shared with the broader IGF community for further consultation.

We are less than five months to the 11th IGF Meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico. I am glad to know that the preparations for the Meeting are well underway, drawing on good lessons learned from the past IGF meetings.

The inter-sessional work of the IGF in various tracks such as the Best Practice Forum, Dynamic Coalitions, and policy note on "Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion" have been well received by the IGF community.

I want to thank the MAG Chair, Lynn St Amour, the MAG members, and the Host Government of Mexico for your leadership, commitment and for the solid preparatory work done so far.

But I am also aware that that the MAG has very challenging tasks ahead – including the need to evaluate over 260 workshop proposals and 45 Open Forum Proposals – the most that the IGF has ever received.

I am confident that you will adopt a balanced approach on the wide array of topics on Internet governance, taking into account the diversity across stakeholder groups, geographical representation and gender.

The remarkable growth of National and Regional IGF Initiatives also speaks well of the global relevance of the IGF.

We should explore concrete ways to enhance linkages and leverage the synergies among them and with the IGF.

We could also extend capacity development efforts to reach out to those in need.

Let us aim for another great year for the IGF in Mexico, in enriching policy dialogue for the Internet to empower sustainable development for all on this shared planet.

I look forward to your active engagement and a productive outcome.

Thank you.
