UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL MR. JUNHUA LI

ADDRESS TO THE IGF 2023 GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT
“Safe Digital Future”

Kyoto, 8 October 2023
13:30-15:00 JST (Annex Hall 1)

Young people from around the world,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to greet you here.

This IGF 2023 Global Youth Summit is the result of a year-long, global collaboration between youth IGFs from around the world.

It has evolved organically, from the dialogues held at regional IGFs that spanned continents, all the way from Finland to Colombia, Australia, Nigeria, and now Japan.

The issues you address are crucial in today’s world, such as the mental well-being of young people in the digital era, online human rights, cybersecurity capacity-building, and the influence of Artificial Intelligence.
The scope of this collective effort has underscored the commitment of young people to creating a safer digital world, fostering dialogue, and enhancing digital literacy and security for all.

The digital age has ushered in tremendous opportunities and conveniences, from instant and borderless communication to access to vast knowledge resources.

But it has also brought about numerous challenges, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy breaches, and the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

About one-third of the global population, or 2.6 billion people, remain unconnected, with the majority from among the least developed countries and in the African region.

More deliberate and sustained efforts are needed to achieve universal and meaningful connectivity by 2030.

As we grapple with these issues, it has become evident that young people must play a pivotal role in shaping the solutions.

The reasons for this are twofold.

First, you, the youth, are the most qualified among us to address these issues! You have grown up with digital technology as an integral part of your lives.
Second, because you are not just mere users of digital technologies. You are also creators and innovators. You know its strengths, its weaknesses, and its potential.

But young people are not on this journey alone. To best leverage your contributions, your engagement with other stakeholders is key.

A healthy inter-generational exchange of ideas can foster mutual understanding and lead to more effective strategies for digital safety.

Today, I am delighted to witness the realization of this vision.

Seated around this table are not only youth from diverse backgrounds but also esteemed senior experts, including diplomats, legislators, and cyber leaders. This presents a valuable opportunity for all of us to learn from the confluence of experience and innovation.

I hope that today’s session will inspire communities around the world to create environments where youth feel heard and their contributions acknowledged. Their concerns and ideas should be taken seriously, and they should be encouraged to take the lead in initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy, cybersecurity, and responsible online behaviour.

Thank you.