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Plenary Session 2: “Beyond Digital Divide, Towards Global Prosperity”

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Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to join you for this important event. And, my thanks go to the Republic of Korea for this forum and for their warm hospitality.

The Internet has been the basis of one of the most amazing and exciting periods of transformation in history. As a boundless platform for human expression, creativity, and innovation, it has brought the world so much - economically and socially. Today, we have nearly 3 billion people online, however, we must not forget the 4.5 billion people who are still not able to fully enjoy the same access and resultant benefits.

One of the greatest challenges we all face is to make sure no one is left behind. While access is improving through investment in physical infrastructure, cheaper and more portable devices, and other technologies, there is still a long way to go.

A collective effort is necessary and the Internet Society with its more than 60,000 members and supporters, and nearly 100 Chapters worldwide, along with many other Internet community organizations, are working together to ensure that the fundamental principles of open, transparent, and decentralized collaboration continue to expand the Internet’s global reach and fuel its growth, opportunity, and socio-economic benefits.

We believe the Internet is for everyone – and we envision a world:

- Where everyone can connect to the Internet and have the opportunity to participate equally as Internet citizens;

- Where everyone can benefit from applications and services built on open Internet
standards, and use the Internet freely for communication and commerce; and

- Where everyone can participate in creating platforms, technologies, and content to help ensure local and global needs are all met.

As we look ahead, it is clear that the Internet can have a major impact in propelling emerging economies forward, and in turn these emerging economies will have a major impact on the world as well as the future of the Internet. These economies are at the forefront of Internet growth. Many are also experiencing some of the fastest rates of GDP growth in the world and have young populations, who are the digital natives of the future. These factors alone make them exciting consumers and creators for a wide range of Internet-enabled services and trade. Combine that with their rich diversity, and the possibilities are limitless.

The Internet supports innovation without requiring permission. I am reminded of a young student in Nairobi, Wilfred Mworia, who like many around the world created an application in anticipation of the iPhone release in 2008 – except that he used a software kit downloaded from the Internet, had never touched an iPhone, and at a time when the iPhone didn’t work in Nairobi.

As new Internet users like Wilfred come online they are quickly transitioning from consumers to creators, innovators, and producers; they are taking advantage of the efficiencies and opportunities that access to the Internet offers. The digital content and apps developed in emerging markets do not just support skilled jobs and new infrastructure, but are also exported for needed revenues.

What is also important to remember is that the impact of the Internet in emerging economies is a benefit for all of us. As more and more people come online, the Internet will be transformed in ways that are hard to imagine but that will certainly keep making it stronger – that is, provided new and existing users have the chance to access a global, open, interoperable Internet.

Fostering this enabling environment requires multistakeholder cooperation, which we have seen work successfully in the areas of Internet policy, open technical standards, and development.

The multistakeholder approach recognizes that various stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, the academic and technical communities, and of course, governments all have responsibilities, expertise, and valuable know-how in determining how the Internet will evolve and be managed.
In terms of development, we’ve seen the multistakeholder model work very successfully. Extensive work in the establishment and operation of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) demonstrates the value of collaboration among many actors, including: Internet Service Providers, content providers, research networks, and many others to minimize traffic routing obstacles and costs. Research has proven the far-reaching benefits of establishing multistakeholder managed IXPs in emerging markets.

A study commissioned by the Internet Society found that IXPs enabled ISPs in Kenya and Nigeria to save millions (USD) in telecommunications costs and raise additional revenues. All this, while simultaneously speeding up local data exchange and creating robust self-supporting communities. The Internet Society is now applying a similar approach to help encourage the development of locally hosted content and services, again leveraging the multistakeholder model.

The Internet is a story that is still unfolding. The Internet Society strongly believes that to ensure a sustainable Internet, the Internet must maintain its core characteristics of:

• global reach and integrity;
• interoperable technical standards;
• permission-less innovation;
• open access;
• respect for fundamental human rights such as privacy and freedom of expression for all users;
• openness for business and economic progress; and
• a governance model based on open, transparent, collaborative, fair, inclusive structures and due process.

Today, we face many challenges: the challenge of finding appropriate solutions to important but difficult issues, the challenge of maintaining trust, the challenge of dealing with security and law enforcement objectives while preserving the key Internet characteristics and users’ rights, to name a few.

The highly publicized covert government-sanctioned surveillance activities have highlighted new challenges to the Internet – alarming challenges. Any actions – even those justified on the grounds of national security – that interfere with the privacy of its’ own citizens or of other nations’ citizens will hinder all our efforts, particularly those of the international community to solve shared problems in cyberspace and beyond. If we want the Internet to remain a driver of
economic growth, it must remain a trusted channel for secure, reliable, private communication between users. Actions that undermine that trust also threaten to disrupt natural economic and social interactions that are the foundations for sustained global prosperity.

It is perhaps worth recalling our comments at the Budapest Forum on Cyberspace, where we outlined four possible scenarios. One was the “Moats and Drawbridges Scenario” (or Balkanized Internet, if you wish). Many of the ideas that are being promoted in response to these surveillance issues are a reductive model with a focus on security, risk mitigation, and control through digital borders. This will come at the expense of economic and social prosperity and user’s ability to fully exercise their human rights.

Earlier this month, the leaders of organizations responsible for the management and coordination of the Internet technical infrastructure met in Montevideo, Uruguay.

They noted that the Internet and World Wide Web were both built and governed in the public interest through unique mechanisms for global multistakeholder Internet cooperation, and this has been intrinsic to their success. We discussed the clear need to continually strengthen and evolve these mechanisms, to be able to address emerging issues. In fact, this is why we refer to the Internet Ecosystem – it is continually evolving.

Specifically,

- We reinforced the importance of globally coherent Internet operations, and warned against Internet fragmentation at a national level. We expressed strong concern over the undermining of the trust and confidence of Internet users globally due to recent revelations of pervasive monitoring and surveillance.

- We identified the need for ongoing effort to address Internet Governance challenges, and agreed to catalyze community-wide efforts towards the evolution of global multistakeholder Internet cooperation. In this regard, the outputs from WSIS and the IGF to be held in Indonesia next week will play a central part.

- We called for accelerating the globalization of ICANN and IANA functions, towards an environment in which all stakeholders, including all governments, participate in their respective “expert” roles.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that the Internet community and the international community join forces to ensure that appropriate policies are collaboratively developed and fairly implemented, and that restrictive or harmful policies are not pursued. The multistakeholder Internet governance principles that have come to define the Internet must be preserved and extended.
The Internet has tremendous potential for economic and social good, but unless all stakeholders trust the Internet as a safe place for business, social interaction, academic enquiry, and self-expression, those economic and social benefits are all put at risk.

In closing, it is exciting to think about the new energy, the new ideas, and the increased richness the Internet will have when we unleash the creativity of the billions yet to come online. The global Internet has always been shaped by its users; it is essential it continues to do so. Empowering every individual on this earth to fully participate in the Internet’s evolution is critical to our collective well-being, and to creating the best possible Internet and the best possible society.

The Internet has given us a view of humanity that no generation has ever experienced before. As a contributor to the world economy, the Internet's impact is stunning. But we still have a long way to go before it is truly .... an Internet for everyone.

Thank you.