Sofie Maddens Keynote Speech for INET Bangkok

H.E. Anudith Nakornthap, Minister of Information & Communication Technology, Dr. Thaweesak Koanantikul, Executive Director of National Science & Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) under the auspices of the Ministry of Science & Technology, members of the core team represented by 10 key organisations; namely Assumption University, Association of ICT, Electronic Government Agency(EGA), Electronic Transaction Development Agency (ETDA), Federation of Thai Industries(FTI), Thai Netizen Network, Thai Internet Service Provider Association (TISPA), Thai Network Information Center Foundation, Thai Webmaster Association, Thailand IPv6 Forum, TOT Plc. and UniNet; sponsors, ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be here in the beautiful city of Bangkok and to represent the Internet Society at this important meeting. The aim of this INET Bangkok is discuss the creative power of the Internet and create even more visibility for the important work of ensuring a free and open Internet for the benefit of all people and to help educate new audiences on the importance of participating in the Internet governance process.

Before I go further into my remarks, I want to take this occasion to thank those who have helped us make this event a success. We are delighted to collaborate with the Thailand Internet community, the National Science & Technology Development Agency and the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology and to provide the opportunity to discuss the Internet’s impact on Thailand’s economy and society. I’d also like to extend our congratulations to .TH on its 25th year of serving the Internet community.

Considering the history of the Internet, 25 years is a long-time! Thailand was one of the few countries in the world and in the region to start using the Internet before anyone else. Quite a pioneering country! Like you, I strongly believe that the Internet is essential in terms of economic and social development. That message comes across strongly in the “Smart Thailand 2020” vision, which states “ICT is a key driving force in leading Thai people towards knowledge and wisdom and leading society towards equality and sustainable economy”. An open and accessible Internet is a major part of that process.

The Internet has changed our countries, our regions, our world. But the Internet is not just important in terms of economic and social changes to our country or our region. The Internet has also changed our personal world, and individuals – using the power of the Internet – can create change and innovation in their lives and community. We are all passionate about the Internet – that is why we are here. Personally, I truly believe in the importance of the Internet. I am a professional working in multiple countries, a mother, a daughter, and in all these roles the Internet is essential to allowing me to do what I do and to be who I am. Like most of you, it allows me to learn, to communicate, to work, to research, to acquire goods, to find entertainment.

That in itself has its challenges and raises concerns. The pace of technological innovation is fast and the results often so profound that there are understandable concerns. While more than 2.5 billion people have access to the Internet today, two-thirds of the world has yet to come online. In the midst of all of this, policymakers naturally wonder what their role is in the broader Internet ecosystem and how to make good public policy in the face of such rapid change.

There is much WE can do together. Many governments are concerned about security, privacy and consumer protection. Thailand, too, is at a critical juncture, with key legislation pending on issues such as privacy, data protection, and cyber-security. In addition, Thailand is playing a key role in developing the ASEAN Government Cloud Framework. All this combines to present an unprecedented opportunity in Thailand to advance the most important values of the Internet: open standards, the multi-stakeholder model, and universal access for all people.

Governments, policymakers and regulators have a key stake and role in policy development and implementation to achieve, amongst others universal access for all.

It is important that they keep an open mind about the approach that so many advocate with respect to Internet development, which is that of multi-stakeholder development. Those who favor the existing model of multi-stakeholder development should redouble their efforts to understand the underlying concerns of governments. For governments, it is also important to understand and accept this important model and to know that the process does not reflect a lack of governance. On the contrary, it is a model of governance that has served the Internet and individuals across the world extraordinarily well, leading to innovations and infrastructure development that may not have come about at all with a top-down model, and certainly wouldn’t have come as quickly.

It’s true that a multi-stakeholder approach puts many key Internet-related decisions in the hands of businesses, computer scientists, technical organizations and even end users, with a different role for governments than perhaps they are used to.

For those not familiar with the Internet Society, let me just take a minute to provide you with some further background on ISOC. We at ISOC are dedicated to the stability, continuity, and advancement of the global Internet. As a cause-driven organization, our mission is to ensure an open, global, fully accessible Internet for everyone.

The Internet Society thus actively advances and promotes key Internet technologies that are vital to the open, global Internet – through a multi-stakeholder approach, working with many partners and regional organizations, civil society, private sector, governments, and international organizations. Along with our more than 65,000 members and supporters, 90+ Chapters and more than 140 Organization members, we also work with civil society, private sector, governments, and international organizations. We are members or recognized observers of virtually all IGO’s – WIPO, ECOSOC, UNESCO, OECD, ITU and also many regional orgs – APEC, APEC TEL, CITEL, to name but a few. Our work spans the globe with five regional bureaus – Asia Pacific, Africa and Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Europe.
We all work together, nobody, and no one body controls the Internet, or should control it. We work together in a distributed, collaborative effort, each with their broad mission and communities, and based on expertise and trust. The sweeping impact is because it has been guided by a few simple principles, or core characteristics, that have not changed over time. Importantly, we cannot take the Internet for granted or lose sight of the fact that the primary reason the Internet has had such a profound impact on economic growth and social development, here in Thailand and around the world. It has become indispensable -- enabling unprecedented levels of interaction, engagement, participation, and influence. Online users today are linked instantaneously to news, information, and content. And, as global citizens, they can instantly connect to groups of people and communities involved in issues and happenings at local, national, and international levels.

The latest numbers from Thailand indicate about 20 million Internet users with a 30% penetration rate. This is an important statistics for instance in access and future accessibility. We must continue to ensure and safeguard it for everyone to be able to benefit from the Internet today and for tomorrow. Therefore, our mission is not abstract! It is tangible and real.

There are many exciting initiatives underway to boost Internet penetration and to take advantage of the many benefits that the Internet provides. Governments can help to facilitate this growth. As one exciting example -- we applaud the SMART Thailand initiative, and its goal to encourage the use of the Internet to raise the country's competitiveness in the world, to empower local stakeholders including education and business sectors to be competitive with other countries, and to help the Thai population to use ICT to improve their quality of life.

To come back to a point I made earlier, we truly believe that the Internet can have a profound impact on economic growth and social development, here in Thailand and around the world. It has become indispensable -- enabling unprecedented levels of interaction, engagement, participation, and influence. Online users today are linked instantaneously to news, information, and content. And, as global citizens, they can instantly connect to groups of people and communities involved in issues and happenings at local, national, and international levels.

The challenge for all of us is how do we ensure the billions not yet online will have access to same Internet we do today? Very importantly, we cannot take the Internet for granted or lose sight of the fact that the primary reason the Internet has had such a sweeping impact is because it has been guided by a few simple principles, or core characteristics, that have not changed over time. The pioneers who built and managed the Internet in its early days not only worked to develop technical standards and establish the basic functionality of the Internet, but they also helped to shape the spirit of the Internet -- based on the principles of sharing, open access, and choice.

It’s exciting to think about the new energy, the new ideas, and the increased richness the Internet will have as a result of the billions of new Internet users yet to come online. But these benefits will only accrue if the Internet retains its core qualities -- of global reach; easy, open access; collaboration; and innovation not requiring approval from any authority.

As the Internet continues to grow and reach new users, it will bring challenges, but also opportunities. User education is a key factor in ensuring the Internet remains a dependable utility. Issues such as cybersecurity are a challenge, but if we work together in an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach, we can develop sustainable solutions.

We must continue to ensure the technical infrastructure of the Internet remains secure and stable, and encourage the deployment of IPv6, DNSSEC, and other technologies that are critical to the long-term health of the Internet. Many governments have recognized that they have an important role to play in promoting adoption of these technologies and are leading by example by deploying IPv6 in
their own networks and infrastructure. I understand that the Ministry of ICT and the Thai Government have now mandated that every
government network be IPv6 enabled. Again a very good example of the foresight and prudence of the Ministry to do so. Very much
the case for leading countries such as Japan, Korea, EU and the United States.
As the Internet continues to grow and continues to spur economic and social development around the world, the policies and
practices of tomorrow must grow from the shared principles and the shared vision that gave us the Internet. The Internet and its
future involve all of us. And we must all continue to work to keep the Internet open, thriving, and benefitting people around the globe.
Thank you again for the opportunity to join you today and we, at the Internet Society, look forward to working more closely together
as trusted partners to ensure the Internet is available to everyone and continues to help drive economic growth and social
development in Thailand.