Internet Society's 2015 Global Internet Report: Mobile is Key to Fulfilling the Promise of Internet Connectivity for the Next Billion People

Challenges remain as 'affordability' and 'relevant content' surpass 'availability' as main barriers to global Internet access

[Washington, DC and Geneva, Switzerland – 7 July 2015] – The Internet Society today released its *2015 Global Internet Report,* www.internetsociety.org/globalinternetreport, the organization's second annual report on the global state of the Internet. Focused o   the impact of the mobile Internet, this year's report shows that mobile has fundamentally transformed Internet access and use, and holds the key to fulfilling the promise of Internet connectivity for the next billion people.

People are increasingly accessing the Internet through mobile devices. Today there are more than 3 billion people online and the mobile Internet offers hundreds of millions around the world their primary, if not only, means of accessing the Internet. In addition to providing access, benefits of the mobile Internet arise from using all the features embedded into smart devices, which are typically accessed via convenient apps.

"We applaud this global shift in the Internet dynamic, with mobile playing a significant role in the rapid pace of new Internet users," said Internet Society President and CEO Kathy Brown. "The Internet is truly global and every new user online benefits other users, for social interaction, economic opportunities and many other benefits that were previously unimaginable."

While the digital divide around the world is closing with the help of mobile, challenges still exist. One key finding of the report is that given the availability of the mobile Internet, affordability and lack of relevant content are now the main barriers to Internet access. Even taking into account regional variations, in most, if not all, countries, the availability of mobile Internet service far outpaces adoption rates, meaning that a significant number of people have access to service, but do not subscribe.

There are numerous countries for which the cost of mobile Internet service is more than 5% or even 10% of average per capita income. Further, while   significant segment of the population can access and afford the mobile Internet, they do not yet have enough interest to begin using it. This can be attributed to language barriers and limited locally-relevant content, including a lack of access to major app stores in some countries, which limits the usefulness of a smart device.

Apps are increasingly used as the primary means of interacting with the Internet, and the report highlights the many benefits of apps as well as the challenges. The vast majority of apps are native to a particular proprietary mobile platform, such as Android or Apple. This raises the costs for developers to

make apps for all platforms and for consumers to switch between platforms, limiting choice and competition between platforms.

"Today we associate the mobile Internet with   smart device that runs o   specific platform and provides access to the apps that we use," suggests Michael Kende, Internet Society Chief Economist and author of the report. "While this has created amazing benefits for users and an entire app economy for developers, it locks users into a chosen platform and ultimately limits choices in   way that is new to the Internet."

The mobile Internet has allowed more people to access the Internet to do more things in more places. The report celebrates the role of the mobile Internet in shifting the digital divide debate from whether access is available, to whether the access is affordable and relevant. However, Kathy Brown notes that, "Despite the remarkable evolution of the mobile Internet, there are challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that all users – existing and future – enjoy the full benefits of access to the open Internet."

Report Highlights:
- 94% of the global population is covered by a mobile network, 48% are covered by mobile broadband, and 28% have subscribed to mobile Internet services.
- The gap between availability and adoption of mobile Internet is due to affordability and lack of relevant content. Policymakers should focus on filling this gap by making the services more affordable by removing taxes on equipment, devices, and services, and eliminating regulatory barriers for operators. Local hosting of content can also help lower costs by avoiding the use of relatively expensive international capacity to access content.
- As demand increases, governments will need to ensure an adequate allocation of spectrum for mobile Internet use.
- More than 80% of online time on mobile is spent on apps, as opposed to a browser. Even adding in desktop browsing, users spend more than 50% of overall online time using mobile apps.
- Smart devices provide many useful services and features, such as location awareness and cameras; however these offerings raise increased privacy issues.
- Usage of the mobile Internet depends on wireless interfaces and access to apps, which can lead to heightened security concerns.
- A   increasing reliance o   mobile apps, combined with those apps being native to a particular proprietary mobile platform, raises the cost of creating apps for each platform, the cost for users switching between platforms, and thereby limits platform competition.
- The web app environment enables developers to create websites with advanced features that can be installed o   a mobile device with an icon similar to existing apps. Developers can create one web app for all platforms – consumers can easily move between platforms the way they switch browsers today – and new platforms can enter and compete on more of an even ground.

About the Internet Society
The Internet Society, http://www.internetsociety.org, is the trusted independent source for Internet information and thought leadership around the world. It is also the organizational home for the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). With its principled vision, substantial technological foundation and its global presence, the Internet Society promotes open dialogue on Internet policy, technology, and future development among users, companies, governments, and other organizations. Working with its

members and Chapters around the world, the Internet Society enables the continued evolution and growth of the Internet for everyone.

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