Report on the Plenary Session on Tuesday, 15th December

The WSIS +10 High-Level Meeting was opened by the UN Secretary General who reaffirmed the UN's commitment to building a stable and inclusive Internet. Development was an underlying theme in almost all statements, linking the WSIS process with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Ecuador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Maldives, on behalf of small island developing states (SIDS), also highlighted the link to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. India emphasised the importance of the Digital Solidarity Fund.

Statements listed a wide range of **digital divides**: between those with and without access to the Internet, between rural areas and cities, and between men and women, within and between countries. The Republic of Korea called these divides our most important and urgent task; the UAE pointed out that they could have grave consequences. The EU added that there is a growing divide between those with access to all services on the Internet and those with access only to basic services, hinting at net neutrality issues. The Russian Federation indicated that the effective use of spectrum was one approach for bridging digital divides.

Access was another important topic. Switzerland noted the need for equality of access to broadband, ICTs, and capacity development, and the need to overcome dissymmetry. India articulated the concerns of several countries when it pointed out the differences between 'voice' and 'choice', and the need to eliminate the gap between digital haves and have-nots. The speaker for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) noted the need for access to ICTs to overcome development challenges and support economic health, while other least developed countries (LDCs) (Group of 48), cited access as a requirement to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030.

Kazakhstan voiced concern for rural access in particular, while France noted the need to ensure that the Internet is open to women, children, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. The Maldives/Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) highlighted that access alone does not result in knowledge; effective capacity development is needed to enhance end users' productive use of data. China considered that access to ICTs must be scaled up to overcome divides. The Republic of Korea cited its own experience to underline that access is an achievable goal. Chile mentioned the need for providing incentives to develop ICT infrastructure, and Uruguay explained that it has 'closed the digital divide' with its policy of delivering free computers to schools, the elderly, and low-income households.

Several speakers, including the EU and Latvia, emphasised the need to develop **local content** in different languages. Furthermore, development was highlighted in the growing possibilities of e-applications.

India, Bangladesh, Spain, Slovakia, and the UAE, among others, noted the importance of **mobile technology** for the information society, with India noting the possibilities of leapfrogging technology and the UAE showcasing its achievement of 100% mobile coverage and penetration.

Capacity development was stressed as a key to digital development. The Netherlands has been particularly active in developing the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise as a capacity development instrument. Speakers suggested that education is necessary to capture the benefits of ICTs; this message was central to the statement of Paraguay. Tunisia mainly focused on the importance of empowering youth, as they have been digital change-makers in the country. Bangladesh and the LDCs, Turkey, and Slovakia offered the sharing of good practices as a valuable resource. Austria sees digital competences as the core of capacity development. For Latvia, strengthening capacity for analytical and critical thinking must not be forgotten while dealing with technological skills.

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Almost all speakers mentioned the need for a **multistakeholder** approach to digital policy, and many gave examples of how this approach has been effective so far. For example, Brazil, Germany, and France mentioned NETmundial⤤ and the NETmundial Statement as important examples of the multistakeholder approach. Furthermore, some speakers saw a limited role for governments in this arrangement; it needs to be 'nuanced', as governments 'cannot control and command the Internet', according to Australia. Poland emphasised that fragmentation into nationally managed cyberspaces is 'the colossal threat we face'. G77 countries and China focused more on private-public partnerships than on the multistakeholder approach.

France particularly noted that there is no credible replacement for multilateralism in the international system, and that only states can represent and effectively protect the interests and rights of individuals. Several countries (Vietnam, the Netherlands) stressed the importance of defining the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

Renewal of the **IGF** mandate was supported by the majority of countries, and Mexico reiterated its offer to host the IGF 2016. Brazil and Turkey, hosts of the last two IGFs, asked for more tangible outcomes of the Forum. Austria feels the IGF is the most important instrument to ensure the Internet for the 21st century, and France hopes for more national representatives at future IGFs. However, not everyone was convinced by the effectiveness of the multistakeholder system and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)⤤. The Russian Federation argued that the IGF has insufficient capacity to react to Internet-related issues and pleaded for an internationally regulated system with the UN having a key role.

Cybersecurity⤤ featured in most of the statements. Estonia shared its experience of facing a cyber-attack and emphasised the need for international coordination to prevent and counter such attacks. The danger of cyber-attacks, and international cyberwarfare in particular, was highlighted by Cuba.

India noted that governments have a key role to play in the area of cybersecurity, while Ecuador/CELAC noted the importance of international law and norms when dealing with cybersecurity. Malta used the example of cybersecurity to note that cracks in the edifice of cybersecurity have shown that the adage 'if it's not broken, don't fix it' is no longer applicable. China pointed out the need for a comprehensive and balanced convention within the UN system to fight cybercrime and ensure security.

Trinidad and Tobago/the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Turkey, Spain, and Finland stressed the need to respect **human rights and freedoms**⤤ when addressing cybersecurity concerns. The Republic of Korea linked user confidence to cybersecurity and capacity development. France noted that the lack of cybersecurity presents risks to development, but that these challenges can be overcome with mutual understanding when facing this common enemy.

Terrorism was also discussed as a cybersecurity concern. Turkey and the UAE, among others, raised the need to ensure that social media is not used for terrorism or propaganda and radicalisation, while the UAE suggested that social media can also be used to counter terrorist purposes.

Still within the purview of cybersecurity and online safety, the UK, host of this year's WeProtect summit, highlighted the **protection of children**⤤. Ecuador/CELAC noted that children's safety is our obligation; we must strive to keep the future of ICTs safe for these digital natives.

On **human rights**⤤ and the Internet, the statement that 'the same rights should be protected online as offline', was heard throughout the sessions, although the issue of human rights was not mentioned by all speakers. **Freedom of expression**⤤ was emphasised by Estonia, the UK, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, and others. Sweden noted that there is no contraction between human rights and security; rather, they strengthen each other. In the same vein, Ecuador/CELAC noted the interrelatedness of human rights, and the interdependence of issues.

Many speakers emphasised the need to uphold the Universal Charter of Human Rights. Austria noted special concern for the rights of journalists and other media professionals, and for citizen journalism for political developments not covered by traditional journalism. Spain mentioned the need to mainstream human rights between the virtual and real worlds, and Finland, the need to uphold the rule of law in human rights and other areas.

Many countries strongly emphasised **gender rights**⤤. Specific comments included the need to overcome the gender divide (Sweden and others); the need to use ICTs for empowerment of women; concern that Agenda 2030 cannot be achieved without gender equality; and concern that lack of gender equality may undermine the potential of half of the world's population (Switzerland). Ecuador/CELAC spoke directly against the harassment and abuse of women and girls, Mexico of gender equity, Spain of equal opportunities and women's access to education and ICTs, and Finland noted that the world cannot afford to use only half of its human resources. The UAE noted that women must be considered equals not only as users, but as creators of data content.

Economic development issues⤤ (e-payments, economic flows across national borders, issues of national trade and customs restrictions) were highlighted by Zambia/LLDCs. Other development issues were mentioned throughout the session: economic development and growth (the Maldives/AOSIS), economies of scale, social growth (Mexico, Germany), fair and equitable tax regimes (Spain). The UAE noted possibilities for economic transformation, and effective change management for government and the private sector.

Speakers frequently referred to the recent **climate change** negotiations as a process and a success to be emulated. The LLDCs and Trinidad and Tobago/CARICOM in particular noted the catalytic role of ICTs for smart technologies, mitigating climate change, and protecting the environment. The Maldives/AOSIS and Colombia added the need for technology transfer and cooperation, while Spain and Slovakia pointed out the need for ICTs to support intelligent cities, clean air and water, a sustainable future, and sustainable growth.

Other issues raised in statements included **net neutrality**⤤ (Chile, Ecuador/CELAC, Turkey), **open data** (Mexico, Kazakhstan), **cloud computing**⤤ (Slovakia), **responsibility of intermediaries**⤤ (Turkey), **common heritage of mankind** (Malta), and **global public goods**⤤ (Finland).

📄 Side events reports are available online at **dw.digitalwatch.org/wsis10**

Mr Philipp Metzger,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS, SWITZERLAND

If we want to continue developing our vision successfully, then WSIS+10 and what follows after that will need to be inclusive and open to all stakeholders. The values and principles of multistakeholder cooperation and engagement have characterised the WSIS process since its inception, and the continued implementation of WSIS outcomes will require the commitment of all stakeholders. Switzerland is also committed to building additional capacities that allow all stakeholders to shape the ICT-related discussions and decision-making processes on an equal footing, in their respective roles. This is also why Switzerland has launched the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP). With Geneva as one of the main hubs where digital policies are being debated, evaluated, and adopted, the GIP provides an inclusive space for digital policy debates and has a special focus on supporting small and developing countries. We hope that the GIP can make a meaningful contribution and invite all interested parties from all stakeholder groups to actively take part and make good use of it.

Ms Kathryn Brown,
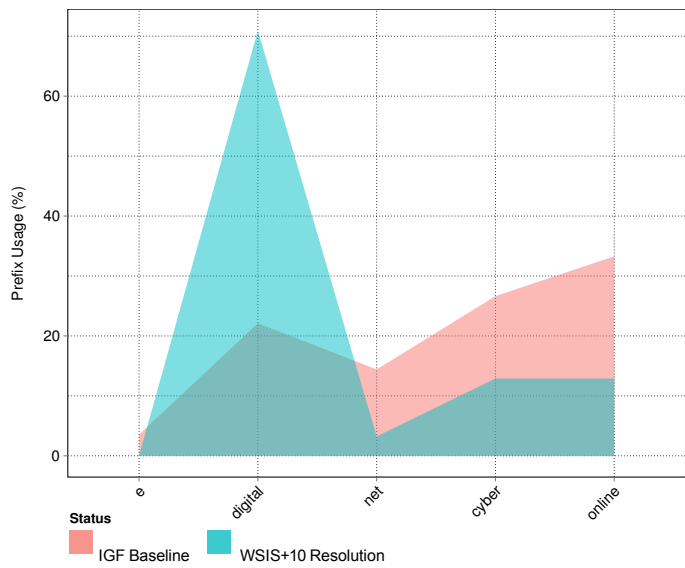### PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INTERNET SOCIETY

We are encouraged by the forward-leaning WSIS+10 Review Final Outcome Document. The world's governments have re-committed to the fundamental proposition, adopted ten years ago, of a bottom-up, people-centred approach to governance. This proposition has been the critical element in bringing unprecedented benefits to the world. We believe the path for the future growth of the Internet and innovation on the Internet must be focused on expanding access to over half of the world's people who have not yet been connected, ensuring trust, privacy, and security online, and enabling human empowerment for Everyone, Everywhere. The Internet Society and our community of more than 80,000 members look to a future where an open, global, trusted Internet will bring opportunity for all. We have a collective responsibility to face the challenges of our age, and governments, users, civil society, human rights advocates, and the Internet technical and academic community must do this together.
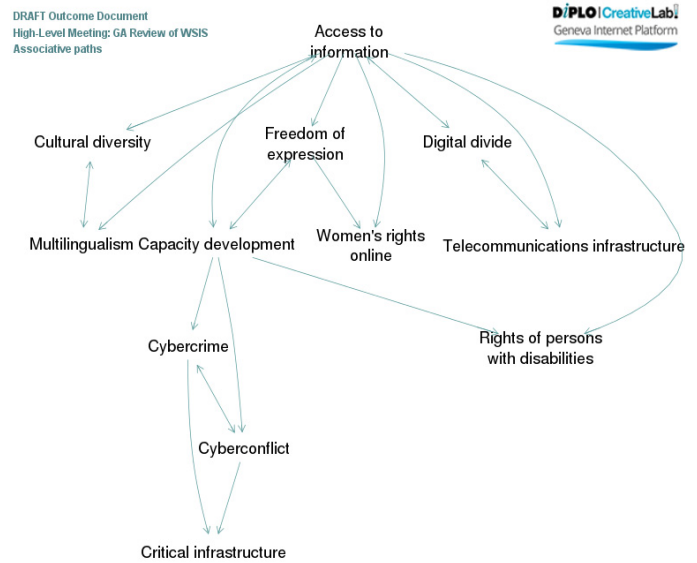
Mr Fadi Chehadé,
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF ICANN

We are looking forward to taking part in these important discussions at the General Assembly on the WSIS outcomes. I believe it is the right course after 10 years to review and assess the progress looking toward the future. We had good discussions this week and hope the adopted UN Resolution will recognise the significant progress that has been made since 2005 in utilising ICTs for economic and social progress, but also the work that still needs to be taken forward, not least in utilising ICTs to assist in the implementation of the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals. ICANN, as one of the many stakeholders in this process, would like to sincerely thank the Presidency and the Co-Facilitators for including our voices in this important debate.
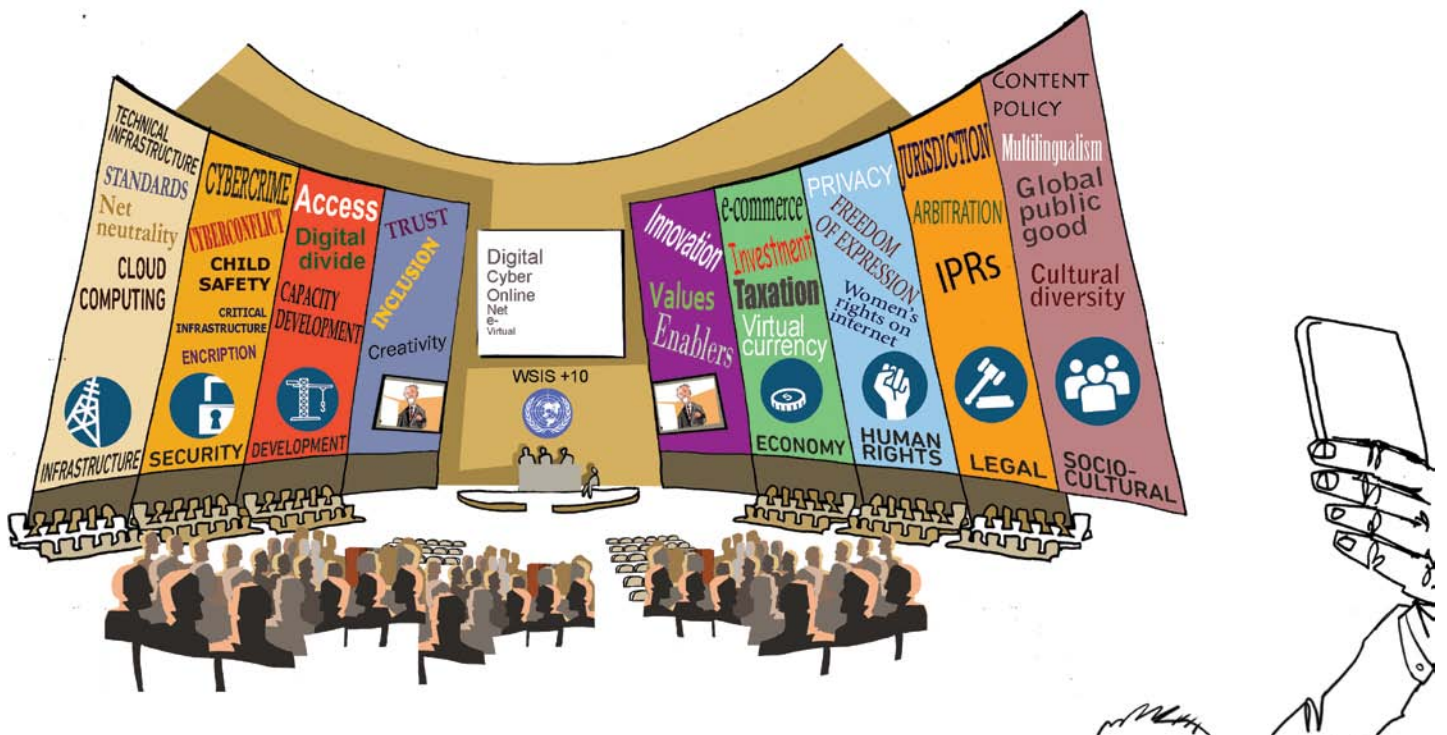
The most frequent prefix used in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document is *digital*, unlike in the IGF texts (in the graph, the analysis of the WSIS+10 Outcome Document is shown in blue, and the IGF texts in pink). *Digital* reflects the development focus of the document. The prefixes *cyber* (usually associated with security) and *online* (associated with human rights) are much less present in the Outcome Document.

This graph illustrates the associative relationships among different IG issues in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document.

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