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MR. LI JUNHUA
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Remarks
Opening Session of 19th Internet Governance Forum, Riyadh

16 December 2024, 9:30-10:00
Plenary Hall

His Excellency, Mr. Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
His Excellency, Mr. Abdullah Alswaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Government of Saudi Arabia,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

I have the pleasure to invite the Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres to deliver his video message.

[VIDEO MESSAGE PLAYED]

Thank you.

I echo the Secretary-General's appreciation to the Government of Saudi Arabia for welcoming us and hosting this important forum.

As the Secretary-General emphasized, the global community's challenges are vast and complex.

In 2025, the United Nations General Assembly will conduct the twenty year review of the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). This will be pivotal moment for global digital governance.

The WSIS outcomes remain highly relevant.

The WSIS Principles and Action Lines continue to provide a key framework for discussions on digital policy and governance.

The 20 year review will align WSIS with broader digital governance and sustainable development goals including with the Global Digital Compact and advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Digital technology has proven its power. It impacts us individually and as a society, affecting our economies and challenging human rights. It is crucial to ensure that digital technologies work for people, not against them.

The WSIS review will also consider extending the IGF mandate.

Looking back, who could have predicted that our early efforts in the 2000s—when Secretary-General Kofi Annan established the multistakeholder IGF—would lead to today's inclusive, resilient ecosystem? At its heart are the people—dedicated stakeholders from every region and sector.

What began as one forum has now expanded to 174 national, regional, and youth IGFs. Through community-driven platforms, you tackle key issues like cybersecurity, environmental sustainability, AI, human rights, gender equality, and digital infrastructure resilience, informing decision-makers worldwide.

Since 2006, over 320 stakeholders have served the world through the Multistakeholder Advisory Group. This group has been a crucial conduit of community input, translating the will of the people into tangible participation.

Likewise, the Leadership Panel, in less than three years, has made the IGF stronger than ever, ensuring our values and mission continue to drive impactful dialogue and solutions, also at the highest levels.

To each of you here, I say: be proud of what you've built.

What started as a vision, quickly grew into an imperative. You stand as guardians of one Internet that is accessible, affordable, safe and resilient. And

you have managed to maintain it as such despite the challenges of the rapidly developing digital landscape, such as sophisticated cyber-attacks or the swift rise of generative AI.

The need for proactive, principled digital governance has never been greater.

And to those joining us for the first time, I say: welcome to the journey.

As we prepare for the implementation of the Global Digital Compact and the WSIS+20 in 2025, I invite you to unite like never before through the IGF platform and take actions that can improve lives worldwide:

- **Strengthen local Internet governance by supporting national and regional IGFs as multistakeholder forums to address local needs and inspire solutions.**
- **Ensure the IGF serves both developing and developed countries, builds capacity across sectors, and fosters cooperation between the global South and North; and**
- **Support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2023 Kyoto IGF made a remarkable achievement, being the most visited IGF ever.

Building on that, let us use this opportunity Riyadh enabled, to present the world with a strategic roadmap for a stronger, more inclusive digital governance ecosystem.

Thank you.

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