UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twentieth session
Geneva, 8-12 May 2017

Item 2: Panel discussion on Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes at the regional and international levels"

Statement submitted by

Mr. Nicolas Seidler
Senior Policy Advisor
Internet Society

Tuesday, 9 May 2017

Nicolas Seidler
Senior Policy Advisor
Internet Society

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective. I would like to share our appreciation for the Secretary-General's WSIS report, as well as for the insights from today and yesterday's panels.

Connecting the unconnected remains one of the key goals to achieve an inclusive information society, and challenges remain.

Yet, we are encouraged by examples we have heard today on innovations, cooperation and local initiatives by various stakeholders that are paying off towards the goal of connecting everyone, everywhere.

At the Internet Society, we have worked for many years to build local capacity, in particular in the field of Internet Exchange Points, and in more recent years on Community Networks.

One lesson we have learned is that it is not enough to just build the technical infrastructure: in addition, we need to invest in human infrastructure: that is, the people that manage and use the networks.

Investing in people has many benefits, from creating high-quality, sustainable jobs, to the chance of becoming not only consumers, but creators in the digital age. Turning people from passive consumers to active innovators & creators is key to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

That is one part of an enabling environment for access that that facilitates investment, local content, deployment and public engagement.

Now, beyond the access divide, we need to be very mindful of other divides.

One that is not new but rightfully getting more attention is the gender divide: as we have heard, women worldwide are less likely to be online than men, even more so in LDCs. This situation does not only deprive women from vital opportunities: it deprives our societies from the vital contribution of women.

There may be other divides in the future that we should be mindful of. One could be a security divide, where people in parts of the globe have the skills and means to protect themselves online,

whereas in other parts, users cannot afford security, are not trained or are not aware about basic security hygiene.
The Internet being a global, interdependent network of networks, we all have an interest for everyone to be secure and to leave no one behind.

And we all have a role as well, there is not single bullet solution. Fora like the Internet Governance Forum, both at the global and regional and national levels, offer invaluable platforms to help shape solutions in these areas.

For the Internet to contribute to SDGs, we need both trust and access: one without the other will not bring the benefits we all aspire for. The Internet Society is committed to work with all stakeholders to advance these two pillars of vibrant and sustainable information and knowledge societies.