

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-third session (virtual meeting)
Geneva, 10-12 June 2020**

**Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the
World Summit on the Information Society
at the regional and international level**

Statement submitted by

Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild
Under Secretary-General and Special Advisor on Preparations for the 75th UN Anniversary
and the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation
United Nations

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

DRAFT Talking Points / Speech by USG Hochschild

- Excellencies, Chair Baipoledi, Director Sirimanne, ladies and gentlemen,
- I appreciate the invitation to attend this session and provide an update on **the follow-up process to the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation**.
- As described in the Secretary-General's annual report on WSIS implementation and follow-up, in July 2018, the **United Nations Secretary-General convened a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation**. The Panel held a series of in-person and virtual meetings, completed deliberations, and submitted its final report, *The Age of Digital Interdependence*, on 10 June 2019. The report made five sets of recommendations on how the international community could work together to optimize the use of digital technologies and mitigate the risks.
- Following the issuance of the report, **the Secretariat reached out in writing to over 500 Member States, entities, and organizations**. More than 100, including several present today, such as UNCTAD and the Internet Governance Forum Secretariat, provided feedback.
- Roundtable discussion groups of subject-matter experts were constituted to discuss the Panel's recommendations, which were broken down further into **eight groups**:
 - 1A Global Connectivity
 - 1B Digital Public Goods
 - 1C/D Digital Inclusion and Data
 - 2 Digital Help Desks
 - 3A/B Digital Human Rights
 - 3C Artificial Intelligence
 - 4 Digital Trust and Security
 - 5A/B Digital Cooperation Architecture
- **I greatly appreciate the input** that UNCTAD and other entities represented here today provided as key constituents of these roundtable discussion groups.
- As you may be aware, yesterday, at the High-Level Thematic Debate organized by the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General presented his *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, which puts forth his vision for **how the international community should engage on these key digital issues**, particularly informed by COVID-19 and the present movement.
- Many of the concrete areas and proposals outlined in the Roadmap are in line with WSIS action lines. For example, the Roadmap includes several recommendations on connectivity, starting with setting a baseline for connectivity to convening investors and developing enabling regulatory environments for smaller-scale Internet providers. It also calls for the development of action plans to improve digital inclusion and a multi-stakeholder network to promote holistic, inclusive approaches to digital capacity-building for sustainable development. As such, I believe that **the CSTD will be an important part of our broader efforts to follow-up and implement the Roadmap**.

- The Report also reiterates the Secretary-General’s support of a **multistakeholder approach to digital cooperation** and I commend the CSTD for the example it has set for years in embodying such an approach in its meetings and working groups.
- As an example of the importance of such an approach, **the Roadmap includes several calls on the private sector** to contribute to digital cooperation in areas such as digital connectivity, inclusion, capacity-building, and addressing challenges such as the environmental impact of ICTs and the proliferation of child sexual abuse content online. Cooperation among Member State governments, the private sector, civil society, and the academic community is essential to tackling these issues.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has **raised the stakes for global digital cooperation**, further emphasizing and amplifying opportunities to cooperate and challenges to doing so.
- Some of the challenges, sadly, **are not new but COVID-19 has made clear the imperative of addressing them**. For instance, lagging global connectivity, persisting inequalities and digital divides, and malicious online behaviour.
- Of particular concern, are the **implications** of pervasively monitoring location information and personal data to **trace** the spread of COVID19 on **human and digital rights**.
- **Global cooperation is necessary** if we wish to overcome the pandemic without drastically compromising values like privacy and freedom of speech. But it is **even more necessary in the aftermath of this pandemic**.
- The Roadmap includes **a call for Member States to place human rights at the centre of regulatory frameworks and legislation** on the development and use of digital technologies.
- **The United Nations—including bodies such as the CSTD—can truly serve as a platform for informed discussion and evidence-based decisions** and practices. This can then inform broader policy and decision-making.
- One topic that the CSTD has deliberated repeatedly, while also being an integral component, is **digital cooperation architecture**. This is one of the areas explored by the High-Level Panel and many key constituents have spoken in favor of the IGF+ proposal, which aims to strengthen the Internet Governance Forum, such as by improving fundraising, inclusion, and orientation towards outcomes and by considering new activities such as a digital help desk.
- Although there is substantial support for the IGF+ proposal, the Roadmap acknowledges that it is important to continue consultations and exploring **other digital cooperation architecture options**. This is to ensure that voices from developing countries are adequately taken into account.
- Later today and on Monday, **my Office is organizing virtual dialogue events to discuss the Roadmap recommendations** along the lines of the roundtable groups and how to advance them. I invite you to join us and hope that your Governments, companies, and organizations will take this opportunity to share ideas and commitments to implement the calls for action. My Office also looks forward to working closely with all of you in the future, in our collective work to strengthen digital cooperation, and better harness digital technologies while mitigating its perils.
- As we look ahead to the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations this September, in a time when the world needs greater solidarity than ever before, I hope

that all of you will also participate in the various UN75 commemorative activities. In particular, I hope that you will complete the one-minute UN75 survey and promote it among your networks, so that we can work together to achieve the Future That We want.

- In summary, let me express my gratitude for all the engagement and support of the CSTD, UNCTAD, and all those present on digital cooperation. We welcome your ideas, proposals, and continued support.