

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**Sixth Internet Governance Forum  
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**Opening Ceremony**

**Statement**

**by**

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**For Communication and Information**

**Nairobi, 27 September 2011**

Distinguished ministers,

Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of UNESCO, it is with great pleasure that I address the sixth edition of the Internet Governance Forum, the first meeting in the extended 5-year mandate. I would like to express our gratitude to the host, the Kenyan Government, for their hospitality and thank the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the IGF Secretariat for the excellent preparation of what I am sure will be another successful Forum.

During the past five years, the multistakeholder nature of the IGF has successfully fostered the exchange of ideas, proposals and approaches among all actors, creating a consensus-building platform. In addition, the IGF has proactively remained on top of key Internet public policy issues.

UNESCO has been an active supporter of the IGF since the outset. Many of our current activities fall into domains related to the Forum. Recently, upon the request of numerous Governments, UNESCO undertook a reflection and analysis on the opportunities and challenges that have emerged from the development of the Internet. One of the conclusions of this study is that the focus of international debate will gradually shift from infrastructure and access to issues regarding the actual use of the Internet. This is a fundamental change as compared to the focus over the past 7 or 8 years.

At the core of the WSIS negotiations seven years ago was the issue of how to provide broader access to the Internet and infrastructure development.. Today we are talking about “high speed access – broadband”, as well as the theoretical ability of 5 billion mobile phone users to access the net via their handheld devices. Infrastructure development has been considerable. Africa is embraced with optical cable that has increase the speed of access considerably.

However, in terms of content development we can observe the same comparative progress. In many parts of the world, local content production, including services, usually lags behind of infrastructure

development and does not generate sufficient returns to the investment made in infrastructure. Innovation is driving not only the technical development of the Internet, but also the applications and services that are on offer, in other words – use. In this regard, we see huge potential for education, cultural expression, sciences, and medicine, in practically all sectors of everyday life.

At the same time, we observe an increase in the misuse of the Internet, which gives rise to legitimate concerns and discussions about the need for regulation. This issue is very complex because of the trans-boundary nature of the Internet. But whichever direction this debate takes, several fundamental principles need to be observed:

- Freedom of expression should not be limited.
- Access to information should be assured.
- The privacy of users should be ensured.
- Quality content development in multiple languages should be stimulated and supported.
- The multi-stakeholder collaborative nature of the Internet should be upheld at all cost.

Let me conclude by reiterating UNESCO's commitment to the IGF, the multistakeholder principle and our contributions to the Working Group on Improvements to the IGF. Our goal is to promote inclusive knowledge societies and, clearly, the governance of the Internet plays a central role in achieving this goal. We owe it to future generations. As a young Egyptian tweeted from Tahir square following the announcement of Mubarak's resignation in February this year: *"My dad hugged me after the news and said 'your generation did what ours could only dream of. I'm sorry we didn't try hard enough'."*

In 10 years from now, we should not have to be sorry for not having tried hard enough.

Thank you.