**UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development**

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Panel:

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

Remarks from: Lynn St. Amour

IGF - Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF-MAG) Chair

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I convey my thanks to Dr. Peter Major, CSTD Chair, for supporting a virtual participation and extend my regrets for not joining you in person. As the new chair of the Internet Governance Forum - Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF MAG), and given the importance of the linkage between the IGF and CSTD in its WSIS follow-up role, I would have greatly valued joining you. Particularly, as this is a somewhat special CSTD meeting, as you meet to consider the WSIS+10 Outcome Document and the linkage to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both adopted late last year.

Given the title of this panel, I will make a few remarks and then will turn it over to Mr. Chengetai Masango, who heads the IGF secretariat. Chengetai will present an update on the status of the improvements made in response to the recommendations from the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF. Both interventions will highlight the progress made, and also outline the MAG’s current activities.

Let me start by saying how honored I am to have been appointed by the UN Secretary General, as the first IGF MAG Chair since the UNGA approved the ten year extension of the IGF. I am also honored to be the first non-governmental appointee and first female Chair of the MAG. On behalf of MAG members, CSTD members and other guests should be assured that the MAG, and I as MAG Chair, more than ever share a commitment to the WSIS vision. This vision “to build a People centred, inclusive and development oriented Information Society” is fundamental to the IGF.

As I have noted in many of my comments over the years “the Internet was built and governed in the public interest through unique mechanisms for global multi-stakeholder cooperation, and this has been intrinsic to its success.“

And so has the IGF been uniquely fashioned: The IGF is convened by the Secretary General of the United Nations as called for in the Tunis Agenda, and is a project of the UN Secretary General, with an institutional home in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). It is governed as a multistakeholder entity through multistakeholder processes.

Those who are on the MAG, as well as a much broader community of stakeholders that include governments, civil society, technical community, businesses, scientists and engineers who have taken part in the ten years of IGF meetings or their planning also govern and help direct the IGF. Many of those who engage in the IGF feel a deep commitment and responsibility for it, for its success and for its direction.

This multistakeholder aspect of the IGF coupled with the UN convening it has created what some call a “hybrid” structure, but its DNA, its values, and its principles are that of an open, multistakeholder process, inclusive and committed to continual improvement. As a special project of the UN Secretary General, it relies significantly on voluntary contributions – in preparation and participation in the forum but also financially.

The CSTD WG report on Improvements to the IGF says: “While maintaining the IGF as a non-binding, non-decision-making and non-duplicative forum, it is important to improve the quality and format of IGF outcomes to enhance the impact of the IGF on global Internet governance and policy. “ It went on to identify improvements in specific areas:

* shaping of the outcomes of IGF meetings,
* the working modalities of the IGF, including open consultations, the MAG and the Secretariat,
* the funding of the IGF,
* broadening participation and capacity-building, and
* linking the IGF to other Internet governance-related entities

As you will hear shortly, progress has been made against the recommendations. At the same time, I and many in the IGF community believe much more can be done, particularly as we are reinvigorated and inspired by our new 10 year mandate. The benefit of this long runway is only beginning to be felt.

While much is being done to improve the IGF in terms of outcomes, modalities, outreach, etc., current MAG efforts also prioritize:

First, greater participation and engagement in Internet governance discussions of all stakeholders but especially stakeholders from developing countries, and increasing participation at all levels – local, national and regional,

Second, Internet Governance and related ICT efforts to help achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals,

Third, linkages between the IGF and other Internet governance activities and/or entities to advance global policy dialogues,

Fourth, National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs) as they are a key focus and growth area. There is work underway to increase communications and synergies between the IGF and the NRIs, as well as between NRI’s, and to increase support for them. As MAG chair, I have **designated a special focus** to support the NRIs collaboration among themselves and with the IGF, and welcome their strengthened engagement in the IGF. The NRIs themselves – over 60 strong at this point – have established a goal of doubling the number of national IGFs by 2018. I am pleased to report that 20 of the National IGFs are located in countries that are Members of the CSTD, and others are engaging in the greater then ten sub regional or regional IGFs.

These NRIs are organic outcomes of the IGF, and are catalyzed by stakeholders – at national and/or regional levels, on a voluntary basis. I know that the Secretariat has a map of the world that shows the overall spread and I am sure the IGF secretariat, and others from the IGF MAG who may be in the room, would welcome direct questions or conversations about the NRIs themselves or indeed anything in this report. NRIs, along with the IGF Best Practice Forums, Intersessional Policy work, and Dynamic Coalitions represent some of the most significant outputs of the IGF.

Fifth and final point, we also need to prioritize increasing funding for the IGF and the IGF secretariat, if we are to make all the progress that is needed and requested. The IGF is more relevant and essential than ever. A lot is at stake and there is much to be gained for Internet Governance, and much to be advanced in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the MAG and in the IGF secretariat we are all working to strengthen the IGF, and to put it on a stable and sustainable path. There is much to do.

The importance of CSTD’s ongoing role in WSIS follow up includes of course, the IGF, as the IGF is an outcome of the WSIS itself. I personally want to thank the CSTD member states, and the Secretariat for all the support you have shown in the past. Not only for the WG report on Improvements to the IGF, which has provided a roadmap for continued strengthening and improving the IGF, but it is worthwhile noting that over 60% of the countries that have hosted an IGF were CSTD members at the time of hosting.

Thank you for letting me address you virtually, and I will continue to follow the discussions remotely. Mr. Masango will now share some of the progress made on the CSTD recommended improvements.

Lynn St.Amour

IGF-MAG Chair