

# United Nations Nations Unies

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Dear Members of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group,

I wish to express my warmest regards to you during this time of change and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also wish to express my gratitude to you, as Members of the Fifteenth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), for your unwavering commitment and dedication to IGF and to finding new and creative ways to carry out the programming work of the Fifteenth Meeting of IGF in Katowice, scheduled for 2-6 November 2020. I am deeply appreciative of the leadership of MAG Chairperson Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen in guiding this endeavour.

The business continuity of almost all organizations, both government and non-governmental, is put to the stress test due to the need to be “socially distant”. This has reinigorated the role of the Internet and digital technologies. It stands to reason that governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations with robust digital platforms and digital tools will be better-equipped to operate in an uninterrupted manner. But it also reveals many underlying economic and social trends, particularly the persistent digital divides that exist both within and among countries. While the Internet and digital solutions have become vital in managing the multiple impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has also given rise to huge spikes of the spread of misinformation, cybersecurity and data privacy issues.

It is incumbent on all of us to work together to effectively meet these challenges. It would be a missed opportunity if the central role of the Internet in this global crisis is not highlighted at the IGF, along with concrete policy options and recommendations as outcomes of the annual IGF meeting, for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly and other global, regional or national forums and platforms.

I call on all MAG Members to seize this unexpected but unique circumstance to highlight the critical role of the Internet in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and in managing this global crisis, while underscoring relevant governance issues in security, data, inclusion and the environment. The Fifteenth IGF is an opportune occasion for governments, the United Nations and other key stakeholders to share how valuable experiences and policy options have been put to use in leveraging the strength of the Internet and digital technologies, while confronting the gaps and digital divides.

Members of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group

Governance issues related to the Internet are not only at the forefront of this emergency, but also related to the future of digital economy, digital inclusion, digital transformation and sustainable development generally. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs remains fully committed to work with you and support the important work of the IGF through this emergency.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



LIU Zhenmin  
Under-Secretary-General