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INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY FORUM 2023
HIGH-LEVEL POLICY SESSION 2: Enabling Environment
ROOM A
TUESDAY, 14 MARCH 2023

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>> We would now like to invite the panelists for the next
session to approach the podium and take their seats.
    (Standing by.)

    >> We are about to start the session, High-Level Policy
Session session 2. We request the panelists to please come on
stage. The Facilitator is right here with us. Anja, over to
you.
    (Pause.)
    >> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Excellencies.
    Hello?
    Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to session
number 2 entitled Enabling Environment.
    This session highlights the importance of an Enabling
Environment for the ICT, development of ICTs through policies
and regulations with a view to accelerate economic growth and
achieve the sustainable development goals.
    Any name is Anja Engen. I'm honored and excited to be
'moderator today for the extraordinary panel, I must say.
    Before kicking off, please note which panelists that you
have four minutes to respond to your questions. I would like to
highlight that, four minutes.
    If time permits, audience interaction will take place at the
end of the session. And also for your statement to be published

in the WSIS Forum policy session outcome document please send them directly to the WSIS Secretariat.

And with that I would like to hand over the floor to Stephen Bereaux, Deputy Director of BDT. Please, Stephen.

>> STEPHEN BEREAUX: Thank you, Anja.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to be with you here today. As a WSIS action line Facilitator from ITU on this important topic of Enabling Environment. As a former regulator myself I'm keenly aware of the opportunities and challenges of creating a conducive environment for inclusive access to the digital economy and society.

Digital impacts all of our lives, every aspect. But for everyone to benefit from digital opportunities in a fair, inclusive, safe and secured manner, we all policymakers, regulators, Civil Society and international and regional organisations, need to collaborate, consult, share, and learn from each other. This is the great power of WSIS.

In the framework of our work in the BDT in the development sector ITU has been the Facilitator of C6 on Enabling Environment since the begins of the WSIS implementation and follow-up process.

The U.N. 2030 Agenda for sustainable development raised the profile of our work in relation to goal nine, goal level sustainable cities and communities over the years we have been providing a platform to discuss measures such as fostering open access to international fiber, affordable access tore sustainable development, connectivity during and in the post COVID digital world, and more.

This year the focus of the action line C6 facilitation meeting will be next generation regulation for sustainable digital transformation. I hope you will join us for the C6 facilitation meeting which will be held on Thursday from 2 to 3 in the afternoon.

Within the framework of the ITU global symposium for regulators, GSR, we have also been working to create platformss for engaging dialogue on key topics while designing viable regulatory frameworks for industry-led technological solutions. It is crucial that regulators engage in information sharing across the industry and between industry and government agencies as well as others such as data protection and consumer protection agencies.

The work done by ITU and collaborative collaboration focuses on the interplay between markets, regulation and innovative tools and processes that support membership and other stakeholders.

In terms of key opportunities, challenges and emerging trends based on the outputs from action line C6 facilitation

meetings one of the main challenges of collaborative regulation at a national and regional level has been to break across silos and to bring together the expertise and the enforcement power needed to level the playing field across borders as well as within them.

Policy and regulation must be consultation and collaboration-based. In the same way that digital cuts across economic sectors, markets and geographies, regulatory decision making must harness the expectations, ideas, and expertise of all market stakeholders, market players, academia, Civil Society, consumer associations, data scientists, and the list goes on.

Before giving you back the floor, Anja, I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone watching that our Enabling Environment discussion will continue at the upcoming ITU global symposium for regulators, GSR23, held in Sharm al Sheikh this year under the theme regulating for a sustainable digital future. We look forward to seeing you there and receiving contributions, 2023 consultation on regulatory and economic incentives for an inclusive sustainable future.

Our work at GSR and action line C6 is critical to stimulate the deployment of sustainable infrastructure, especially in rural and isolated areas and to identify the right incentives to ensure the introduction of emerging ICT technologies and business models. Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you for your intervention, Stephen. With that as context for this session I would like to turn to you, Your Excellency Mr. Khalif, Ministry of communication and technology of Somalia. Noting your extensive experience as both a politician and entrepreneur. What are policies and regulatory frameworks that the Ministry has put in place to promote development of ICT infrastructure and telecommunication environments?

Also as a follow-up question, how do you see the evolution of the digital literacy in Somalia impacting the future of work?

>> JAMA HASSAN KHALIF: Thank you for having me here and I'm happy to be part of the WSIS 2023 in the U.N. building in Geneva.

The nation I represent, Somalia as Minister of communication --

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Excuse me, would you kindly put your microphone closer to --

>> JAMA HASSAN KHALIF: It is working now?

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Yes, closer to your mouth. Thank you.

>> JAMA HASSAN KHALIF: Again, I am glad to be here today with the panel of WSIS programme. And in Somalia we have

prioritized ICTs and the first an only sector. We would like to
develop and the question you ask is, we have policies in place.
The first thing we made was Telecommunications Act with policies
in priority and that makes requirements, comparative
protections, interconnections, nationalizing the policy which
also impacts community and universal access plan, did digital
inclusion and such and eGovernment policies.

So regulatory part, we have created a national communication
agency called NCA. And this is the priority we have
nationalized this strategy broadband connectivity as well.

The second question you asked also, to close the gap of
unconnected digital divide, we have priorities of bringing
people together and advanced trainings for youth. And we are
planning to have a big project to connect the unconnected. It
is really important for us in this global village. And people
are connected together digitally.

So we are coming from -- can you hear me okay?

So to support the end of the digital divide we are closing
the gap by connecting the unconnected.

As a massive campaign for literacy we are training almost
20,000 individuals in the field of digital and ICT department
Ministry and this is where we are right now.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you for your
intervention, Minister.

I would like to turn to you next, Stephen, Stephen Lang
deputy Assistant Secretary of state for information and
communication policy. In your opinion why is a Enabling
Environment relevant to policymakers and also what does the
United States consider as critical components of the Enabling
Environments and how has this changed over time?

>> STEPHEN A. LANG: Is this working? Yes.

All right. Thank you very much, Anja. And good afternoon.
Thank you, everyone. It is a real pleasure and honor to join
such a distinguished panel today. This is really an important
topic. I'm happy to have this opportunity to talk about it.

I think we are all acutely aware that we are convening at a
time of unprecedented global interconnection online. And this
has been made even more pronounced the last few years by the
global COVID-19 pandemic.

The incredible growth that we have seen in the Information
Society has shown how deeply we depend on technology and digital
technologies to advance our work, lives, health and economic
prosperity.

Digital technologies have a real opportunity to advance
progress towards the sustainable development goals. But only if
they can develop in environments that are underpinned by certain
principles. As policymakers we have a key role in fostering an

Enabling Environment that is conducive to innovation, investment and competition while also working to close digital divides and promote inclusion, accessibility, security, and trust.

We must balance our role in facilitating policies and regulatory approaches that allow notice validaters to innovate and citizens to use technologies freely to advance their livelihoods and exercise their human rights while also mitigating the challenges and the inequities that sometimes come with these technologies.

In fact, during COVID-19, we really saw first hand the immediate effects that an Enabling Environment can provide. As governments sprang into action to foster greater connectivity and reduce barriers to technology deployment for citizens that were increasingly dependent on Internet access for their detail lives. We sought to find ways to promote affordability and universal access and worked to Connect youths to build resilience and digital skills.

We have to continue in this way in order to enable the Information Society.

In the United States we have adopted an integrated approach in which we take economics, security concerns, and digital freedom perspectives and represent them equally in our approach to enabling digital connectivity and transformation.

All of this is really underpinned by an open interoperability secure and reliable Internet. We must continue to protect and strengthen the multistakeholder approach to governance that keeps the Internet advancing the free flow of information and running for the benefit of us all.

We have to prioritize and elevate efforts to connect the unconnected and expand affordable, inclusive, safe, meaningful and reliable access to the Internet for individuals and businesses, including small and medium enterprises, so that all people can benefit from digital technologies.

We have to work to build trust at all levels of the digital ecosystem, including through strong protections of privacy.

We also have to work to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people and take measures to combat all forms of discrimination, neglect, abuse, and violence, including sexual and gender based violence online.

We also need to promote investment in inclusive and secure infrastructure deployment incentivizing public private partnerships, reducing barriers to innovation and remaining flexible to allow for the rapid pace of technological development.

At the same time we must support the open, transparent, private sector-led and consensus based approach to standards

development which facilitated interoperability and economies of scale.

    We must continue to promote competition which enables consumer choice, innovation and investment.

    Importantly we must also continue to engage a range of stakeholders across all of our digital policy efforts, since the first WSIS summit the growth of the Information Society brought many new stakeholders whose diverse viewpoints help us to meet the needs of all communities and to address new challenges.

    So that's why I am very happy to be here because it is this type of multistakeholder engagement that is really critical to the future development.

    >> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you so much, Stephen. I think you highlighted many important points indeed for an Enabling Environment.

    With us remotely we have Dr. Mercedes Aramendia, the President of Uruguay regulatory units of communication and services.

    Are you here? With us?

    >> MERCEDES ARAMENDIA: Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?

    >> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Yes, we can, perfect.

    I would like to bring the consumer perspective into the conversation we are having. So considering the importance of the Enabling Environment, what role do consumer protection and aspects related to privacy play in the development of ICT? Also any concerns in your opinion related to consumer protection?

    >> MERCEDES ARAMENDIA: Thank you very much for the question. It is my pleasure and honor to participate in this World Summit on the Information Society 2023 and participate in so important a topic and thank you for the invitation. We are all working to connect everyone but we know that nowadays just connecting everyone is not enough. We have to work on many parallel actions, generating the environment and conditions for all people to be able to make effective use and enjoy the right as well as to maximize the benefits of ICT.

    The benefits that ICT brings to society are evident. As use cases are developed more widespread and universal and more accessible, people will have more tools to make effective use of the right and universalize them more and more.

    However, these benefits present several challenges that we have to work on, being increasingly relevant to the fact that technologies are designed considering the potential impact on human rights to address them effectively from the beginning.

    In this sense I would like to highlight the importance of putting people at the center and working on consumer protection and privacy, as I consider these to be fundamental aspects to

provide security, confidence for people to trust and use ICT, as well as to guarantee human rights in the online world.

Representing consumer protection probably in many of our nations we have had legislation for a long time. Still, I believe that the reality today sits in many cases the national and international frameworks, raising with -- raising with increasing force the need to update regulations, to do so in collaborative environments, being flexible, adapting and addressing the data.

The common principles such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Concerning privacy, the litigation can lead to the loss of privacy. It is necessary to work to protect people's data, guaranteeing their privacy as they become exposed. Personal data are part of individuals' privacy and dignity and their protection is a fundamental right recognised and protected by many international instruments.

The various products and services new technologies collect a lot of information from people who often do not have complete knowledge or understanding as it is often complicated for the average user to understand the algorithm.

This information is used for various purposes, for specific products to sell information, to learn about trend and influence consumer decisions among other examples. Pulling the consent of individuals and the principle purpose administration are becoming increasingly important. About the two previous points, significant questions arise. Access to information, tech users, hate speech and in the inequality and disempowerment with access and innovation being phone.

We have significant cultural and social changes and I think that we have some agreements that, for example, those rights that we have in offline work must be involved in our online work also and also the human being must be at the center. But while many agree on the theory I think these challenges, we need to define how do we transcribe there from the offline world to the online world.

That is key. Beyond the importance of understanding how this new reality works the system, the technologies, the need for trained human resources, recognizing that borders are being erased.

I think that we really need to interpret and concede this warranty is fundamental and we must analyze the context and work in interdisciplinary seems with public, private, academia, participation at the local, national, and international level.

So to conclude, I think that we really must be aware that today the decision must be reviewed shortly due to the speed of change to respond adaptablely to the need for reality and

without prejudice to the search for security, simplification and thank you very much.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you so much, Dr. Mercedes. I totally agree with you. I think we have more work ahead of us when it comes to the role of consumer protection with rapid development of ICTs.

Up next I would like to turn to Dr. Gift Kallisto Machengete, Director General of the postal and regulatory authority of Zimbabwe.

In your opinion what are the main elements of a Enabling Environment for ICTs and sustainable development. What has the ICT regulatory authority in Zimbabwe done to create such Enabling Environments?

>> GIFT KALLISTO MACHENGETE: Thank you for the question. Excellencies, for Zimbabwe, the Enabling Environment is seen from the point of view of policy, legal, market and social considerations, interacting at both domestic and global levels to create conducive conditions for a digital economy.

The elements that comprise a good Enabling Environment are many. Some of them are a good text regime, security and confidence in the use of ICTs and nondiscriminatory licensing regime, consumer awareness management, of dominant operators significant power. And equitable universal access fund disbursement regime and collaborative regulation.

Creating a predictable legal and policy environment is as crucial as basic access to ICTs by all. This is what all administrations must strive to do to enhance access and ensure creativity in the development of ICTs for SDGs and in Zimbabwe is no exception.

What has Zimbabwe done to create such an Enabling Environment? Zimbabwe has implemented a conventional licensing framework that indicators for different types and levels of licenses.

That reduces barriers to entry for small players. Zimbabwe is enforcing infrastructure sharing regulations which enable operators to fairly share infrastructure with a willing leaser, and lessee and swap basis.

Zimbabwe is funding the construction of telecommunication infrastructure through a transparent and effective disbursement of the proceeds of the universal service fund.

Zimbabwe is spearheading construction of telecommunications towers where each telecommunication operator manages a number of shared towers which are then shared with other operators to take away the heavy burden of operators having to incur huge and uneconomic costs of constructing infrastructure in remote areas.

This encourages operators to offer services in marginalised areas.

From 2016 to date, a total of 1,058 telecommunication towers are shared in Zimbabwe.

Again, through the universal service fund we have implemented eLearning, eHealth, E social, eGovernment and research and Development Programmes that assist in creating a vibrant market for this sector.

The regulator is also implemented stakeholder management programme that is seen collaborative government with text regulation to assure that techs do not cripple this sector.

E collaboration with the financial sector regulator to assure financial inclusion through mobile platforms.

We have also collaborations with local municipal and rural administrative authorities to keep way leave fees reasonable for telecommunications operators.

The regulator is also implemented consumer awareness roadshows and communication media programmes to educate consumers and empower them in terms of consumer rights. All these efforts in an attempt to ensure that no player and no consumerrer in Zimbabwe's ICT sector is disadvantaged. Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you so much, Dr. Gift. I think we will move to Mrs. Ekaterine Imedadze, the Commissioner of the Georgia national commission.

As ICT develops new technologies for telecommunication, users become even more important. How should the regulators shape their roles to will create an Enabling Environment for digital development. What are the key initiatives in your country and region that are facilitating further progress in the ICT sector, allowing all stakeholders to contribute to the sector's work and coordination and cooperation methods must be developed to deal with digital challenges?

>> EKATERINE IMEDADZE: Thank you, Anja.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, good afternoon and good time of the day to all of the participants around the world. It is my great pleasure to represent Georgia in this discussion and dedicated to Enabling Environment.

We all agree that ICTs to deliver on their promise of economic and social development, it is critical for the countries to adopt enable enabling legal and regulatory environments.

Enabling refers to policy, legal, market, as well as the social considerations.

So this, digital transformation is accelerated now and the role of regulators should be transforming. First we need to keep up with the pace of the technological advances and strive to find the best possibilities to create favorable conditions for the innovations and development of digital businesses.

And also considering, of course, international regulatory practices.

Second, is the key that, the key highlights in finding healthy balance between Poe moting innovation and protecting the consumer interests. Here I can name, I can start with the legacy role that regulators have. This is promoting competition. But as the markets are still developing, the case-by-case approaches are more appropriate approach.

Another one is enabling smart market entry entry in the country. This is flexibility and dynamickism are essential. Another important is spectrum as major enabler as the growth of digital economy and especially with 5G and new next generation services combined use of licensed and regime shared spectrum. This can help to create the balanced ecosystem which would encourage investments to be more efficient.

Last but not least, the universal service. And this can be an appropriate complementary instrument to achieve the universal broadband access goals. If I may name the specific initiatives, I would like to start with infrastructure sharing. On passive and active levels. Also international connectivity projects. I here would like to mention that in case of Georgia, we aim to build on our regional opportunity to become a digital connectivity hub in south caucuses. It means building in country data centers using submarine digital corridors that can result in acquiring different roles, for example. Being the point of presence of large ice piece as well as content providers serving the different data services, including IXPs.

Another very different, I would like to quickly mention education role for IT campaigns, education of our users. As a convergence user, we are responsible for media communications and assigned the role of developing the media literacy in the country. It means that we place the user in the center with awareness campaigns and programmes about safe use of Internet, child protection, online preventive programmes associated with educational systems and private-public partnerships.

Finally, last but not least, very important role. Georgia com was assigned in this 2023, the year 2023, it is Chairing the Eastern partnership network of regulators which consists of five countries.

I believe that in this challenging time in our region, that Eastern partnership can be instrumental in supporting regional strides and methods for nication of rule of law and regulatory practices and to bring our countries closer to finally our main activities initiatives are common roaming space with EU spectrum harmonisization, broadband development and strengthening interdependence.

We are actively looking for opportunities for extending institutional support from EU organisations and other sectoral international organisations as well for our network.

Finally, I believe that digital innovation must be geared towards digital inclusion and advancement of participatory society. It means that we should engage with Internet of people and the social benefits should be improving quality of life as well as promoting equality, fostering innovation, growth and social prosperity. Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you so much, Ms. Ekaterine.

Joining us remotely we have also Mr. Thomas Coughlin, the IEEE president-elect for 2023.

Are you with us?

>> THOMAS COUGHLIN: Yes. Can you hear me now?

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Yes, we can.

>> THOMAS COUGHLIN: Great.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Perfect. I would like us to visit a topic that we all know obviously, the Information Society requires vast amounts of energy. And I would like to ask you, how would energy efficiency, energy storage and its infrastructure contribute to energy sustainability and address climate change?

What can standards development credibility to address energy efficiency, sustainability and storage?

>> THOMAS COUGHLIN: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be here today. And to speak on behalf of IEEE as a specific activity partner of the 2023 WSIS Forum.

I am sorry is not to be here in person but I got COVID shortly before I was to start traveling.

As the world's largest technical association, IEEE represents 427,000 members from northern 190 countries and dedicated to advancing technology for the benefit of humanity.

It is through our dedicated members that we are working to create a better sustainable future for all.

Aligning technical innovation with sustainability is an integral part of IEEE emission to advance technology for the benefit of humanity. Many diverse individuals and communities of IEEE from around the world are using their expertise and know how to help develop solutions for the critical sustainability issues that face the planet today.

Achieving sustainability, however, requires the acceleration of technological development and deployment. Standards providing the critical framework for advancing sustainable technology which prioritizing people, planet and progress as they play an important role in the guidelines and specifications by which goods and services are used, discarded and recycled.

Transitioning to renewable energy sources is not without challenges. The main challenge is storage of removable -- renewable energy as it is dependent on intermittent energy sources such as sun, wind and water. Standards bodies such as IEEE are working on ways to identify technologies that can store renewable energy efficiently and reliably so that it can be used when needed.

Another interesting example where standards are advancing solutions to address climate change is in the case of data centers, for example, the IEEE standard P2A83 focused on how to extend the digital storage product lifecycle and create a circular economy.

Data centers power the Internet, making digital communications and connection possible. They also account for a percentage of energy use, water use, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Today data centers are more interconnected than ever. When you add cloud connectivity and the shrinking data transfer latency plus the huge amount of energy generated you get a huge amount of data moving in and out of centers around the world. Deploying software platforms to manage efficiently, it is more efficient than manually man.

Estimates show data efficiency can be improved 30 to 50 percent. Sustainable power means utilising sources of energy that are naturally replenished such as owe lar, wind and geothermal power. Developing energy storage mechanisms to collect and save energy for current and future use by using energy more efficiently in combination with that. We can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and other nonrenewable sources, help reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change. Technology is key to reducing waste, promoting resource efficiency and encouraging sustainability.

Standards and widely accepted engineering practices play a fundamental role in the human centric digital transformation, helping to achieve the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring that everyone benefits from efficient energy use.

Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you, Mr. Thomas. Those points are really interesting indeed.

Moving forward, we have also remotely joining us Mr. Andrew Wilson, global policy Director from the International Chamber of Commerce better of commerce. Are you there as well?

(There is no response.)

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Mr. Andrew Wilson, can you hear me?

>> ANDREW WILSON: I am hear. Can you hear me okay?

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Yes, we can.

>> ANDREW WILSON: Thank goodness.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: It is a pleasure having you join us remotely. So far we had a lot of interventions from public sector entities. And I would like for you to go to give us more of a business perspective of enabling environment as we are talking about.

What does enabling policy environment mean in practice and what is the role of business? How cannabis contribute?

Also as a follow-up question, what are some examples of business engagements that demonstrate the value of an enabling policy environment for ICTs and digital technologies in pursuit of the SDGs?

>> ANDREW WILSON: Thank you, Anja. Great questions and I'll try to be brief with respect to time constraints. We are an organisation that represents 45 million across 130 different jurisdictions, both large and obviously small.

From our expected use way to situate the debate on what is an Enabling Environment is really to think back to some of the foundational or fundamental principles of the SDGs which I think ultimately can be summarized as governments cannot solve all of the problems in the world on their own. Partnerships are absolutely the vital, both for Civil Society and with the private sector.

I think when it comes to discussions around ICTs, universal connectivity, et cetera, and especially the business community has been and I think everyone would agree, has been and continues to be a pioneering driving what is needed to enable progressive universal and meaningful connectivity. I say that as what I think is an important reference point because I think sometimes people hear the words "enabling Environment" from business and think it is self-interest in lobbying from the private sector to lobby for lower marginal tax rates or some kind of deregulation.

When we speak to businesses large and small, developed and Developing Countries, what we hear is something very different. It is about creating a genuine ecosystem that drives and enables investment from businesses to maintain and develop sustainable services.

And from our work in recent years, talking to companies, we see four principal, if you like, foundational points for that. The first is a stable and predictable legal environment. Second is open markets and the free flow of data. The latter being I would say vitally important. We fully understand the rationale for implementing restrictions on data flows on the basis of security grounds, or indeed on privacy grounds. But those need to be proportionate, justified and should not be in any way a disguise for restriction on trade and investment.

The third that is vital is a whole of government approach towards policymaking, recognizing that digitization is by nature a multiled and transversal issue. Policies cannot be made in silos or vacuums. Flowing from that is the idea of multistakeholder partnerships to both deliver services but more broadly really working with business and other stakeholders in the development of policy and regulatory environments, particularly terrific to hear the Zimbabwe Minister earlier speaking about collaborative regulatory approaches.

Moving from that to your second point about specific examples, I think in the interest of time the best thing I can mention to you and the participants at the Forum today is an recent paper we published, white paper we published on enabling meaningful universal connectivity available on the ICT website by looks at different case studies and examples of where business has played a tremendously important role in bringing connectivity to previously unconnected. And also identifying some of the challenges that, and particularly areas where we all can do better, government, Civil Society and business.

And in that respect we see three particular areas for further debate and ultimately to do better.

First is how do we effectively facilitate investment across the value chain? Not just thinking about infrastructure, but also looking at content and digital literacy and skills. We can best scope what governments can do more working with business. Second is effective management expect trim which already has been touched upon by one of the speakers. The third is the importance of grounding policies in evidence and data. And particularly collaborating with the private sector to make sure regulatory decisions are informed and ultimately effective in the real world in channeling the investment that is needed to connect the unconnected.

I will leave my comment there in the interests of time, but we look forward to continuing the discussion with the ITU and the other governments present at the Forum next week. Many thanks.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you so much, Mr. Andrew. I totally agree with you, a multistakeholder approach to policy and regulatory development is absolutely imperative.

In the interests of time let's move forward to our final speaker, she will also join us remotely, Mrs. Sally Wentworth, managing Director of the Internet Society. Are you with us?

>> SALLY WENTWORTH: Yes, I am. Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Perfect. So the Internet Society has advanced for the open global Internet. Do you perceive any threats to this vision? What can the ICT community do to address these threats?

>> SALLY WENTWORTH: Thank you, Ms. Anja, for those excellent questions. Excellencies, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and a pleasure to participate on this panel today. And to speak to you about how to promote an Enabling Environment for the growth of an open global Internet.

The Internet Society is a nonprofit organisation with a core mission of promoting and defending the Internet so that people all across the world can benefit from it.

The Internet as we all know is a vital resource that everyone in this room is here to celebrate. The Internet allows us to connect, communicate, collaborate and create with anyone anywhere. It is the backbone of the world economy.

When hundreds of millions of people relied upon the Internet to stay safe during the global pandemic, the Internet didn't falter or let them down.

The Internet is the people's medium. It works so well because no single person or entity controls it. Anyone can choose to connect and the network grows and adapts to meet our needs. When this all works correctly your experience of the Internet should be the same no matter who you are or where you are because we are all connecting to the same global seamless Internet.

But we can't take this for granted. If we are not careful we could lose the Internet and all of the benefits it offers people worldwide.

As the Internet and our dependence upon it grows policymakers are naturally trying to address very real societal challenges that are amplified in the digital age. But how we shape Internet-related policy could have a profound impact on how the Internet functions for generations to come.

Despite very good intentions, decision makers and government and industry are increasingly making decisions that have the potential to hurt the open global Internet, possibly without even realising it. When trying to curb harm online it can be tempting to make seemingly simple changes to laws without fully understanding how those laws will impact the Internet and will affect users across the world.

We must start approaching these challenges in a way that protects the Internet and what it needs to exist and to thrive.

Any policy decision, however well intentioned, that undermines the global interoperable nature of the Internet, the very attributes that have empowered people everywhere to benefit from it, contributes to Internet fragmentation.

Instead of the same global seamless Internet that the world relies on and benefits from we could end up with a splintered degraded version of the Internet that is almost unrecognizable

to the one we have today, one where ordinary people are not able to create, share, or connect freely.

The Internet is in danger of splintering into dozens of isolated networks. This should concern everyone in this room. This is why we must defend the Internet. A shattered Internet is not the Internet.

That is why I'm calling upon the ICT community to come together and defend the Internet from fragmentation. If we don't, the Internet, this life-changing resource, could become a thing of the past.

Fortunately we have tools to help. Because this is one of the most urgent issues facing the Internet, the Internet Society has developed a simple framework to determine if a proposal supports or harms the open Internet. The Internet impact assessment toolkit helps policymakers and businesses alike evaluate the impact of the proposals on the Internet so they can play a leadership role in protecting the Internet from harm and resisting fragmentation.

We made this toolkit with you in mind. Several countries have already started adopting this practice as due diligence in their policymaking processes. The Internet Society is a resource that can help you use this toolkit as you craft policies and make decisions in your countries and your communities.

2023 is our turning point. We must stem this tied of Internet fragmentation so that the Internet, our Internet can continue to be an invaluable resource for everyone.

By uniting together we can safeguard the Internet for future generations. Thank you.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you very much, Sally. I think you highlight very important points here for us to avoid the fragmentation of the Internet.

With that, I would like to open the floor for any questions. We do have a couple more minutes in case for any questions.

(Pause.)

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Do we have a microphone for any questions?

(Pause.)

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Yes, speak to the microphone.

>> My name is Hans, co-data, Germany. Berlin, Germany.

I want to remind in some places of these discussions we heard something like all of government approach or something. What is really necessary is, I think, that in all the discussions we should promote the general United Nations approach in all United Nations instruments nowadays we find the wording all of society approach.

There is not an only private sector approach. There is not an only NGO approach. And not, certainly not an only government approach even if it is a little bit holistic. We also need broad government.

But my road is let us try to use the opportunity to call for all of society approaches as United Nations supported.

>> ANJA JEANETTE HAGA ENGEN: Thank you very much for your contribution there.

I think we are now at, we find ourselves at the top of the hour. It has been a pleasure hosting you on this panel. And we know now, from the contributions that Enabling Environment requires tackling a lot of different policy issues. We have touched upon digital literacy, consumer protection, privacy, bringing the benefits of technology closer to the user, energy sustainability and, of course, the open Internet.

A summary of this session will be provided during the closing of the high

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 level policy sessions which will take place tomorrow from 5 until 6:00 p.m.

With that, again thank you so much for all the contributions. And applause to all the panelists. Thank you very much.

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