UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Sixth Internet Governance Forum
27-30 September 2011

Opening Ceremony

Statement
by
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Nairobi, Kenya

27 September 2011

Distinguished Ministers,
Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations
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, at the same time, ensure that no one would have the power to decide on the presence of any given TLD on the net. 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.

Two years ago, four optical cables were installed in Kenya making access as quick as in Paris. However, in terms of content development, I am not sure that we can observe the same comparative progress. In many parts of the world, local content production, including services, lags behind in terms of infrastructure development and does not generate sufficient returns in relation 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.

One avenue which attempts to address the above-mentioned issues is the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which was established by UNESCO and ITU in 2010. The Commission comprises of government leaders from around the world, as well as the highest-level representatives of relevant industries, international agencies and organisations concerned with international development. UNESCO's role in the Broadband Commission compliments that of the ITU's (which focuses on the infrastructure side) by placing special emphasis on the importance of training, and on the delivery of local and multilingual content and applications through broadband networks. This is to ensure that Internet use is inclusive, and that freedom of expression and cultural diversity are promoted as crucial underlying factors that, in turn, facilitate social cohesion, empowerment and development.

We also note that the increased access to the Internet, has also created an environment in which there is an information overload. The ability to critically analyse information therefore becomes vital, and media and information literacy can play an important role in the optimal engagement of citizens in a digital society. Media and information literacy consists of a combined set of competencies - knowledge, skills and attitudes - that can enable citizens to understand the functions of the media and other information providers, and empower them to critically evaluate content and to make informed decisions, both as users and producers of information and media content, in order to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is therefore a prerequisite for the effective participation of citizens in society, and also serves as an integral part of the progress towards international development goals concerning education and lifelong learning. In this sense, it has positive implications for both the global knowledge divide and the digital divide.

UNESCO's mission to foster media and information literate societies consists of encouraging the development of national information and media literacy policies, including in education. The Organization's strategy is comprehensive, bringing media and information together and taking into consideration all forms of media as well as and other information providers such as libraries, archives, museums and Internet irrespective of the technologies used.

Ladies and gentlemen,
When considering the overall theme of this Sixth IGF, *"Internet as a catalyst for change: access, development, freedoms and innovation" - and* at the beginning of the new extended five-year mandate - it is important that we ensure that we look to this as a period for jointly shaping a governance structure that fosters each one of these elements. That is "*change: access, development, freedoms and innovation*".

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.

Let me once again thank the host country, and wish you all four days of fruitful exchange.

Thank you.