

Dear Colleagues

I offer congratulations, and appreciation for all that the Organizing Committee has accomplished, especially recognizing Oksana, who has been a long-standing supporter of the importance of the national and sub-regional IGF Initiatives to the national level, and in how they are now being more integrated into the global IGF.

The Internet is a resource to all of us, regardless of where we live, and the access it brings to the vast world of content, information, and contacts with each other does truly help us to better understand each other, and to collaborate on how we can harness technology and information as tools, for the good of our own country's citizens, and for the good of the world we want for all -- whether ourselves, our grandparents, youth today, or even their children.

As I live in the United States, people are often amused to learn that I grew up in a very small rural area, without running water, or inside plumbing, or a telephone. The Internet had not been "invented" yet. The World Wide Web did not exist. There were no laptops, cellular phones were not yet invented, and books, and the radio were how we gained access to information and learned about the outside world, and received useful information about how to be a better farmer or student. Today, we all agree about the importance of the Internet and the world-wide web it accesses as essential platforms for access to information, and each other. We find that doing things "online" speeds our accomplishment of our daily tasks, whether they be as a governmental agency employee, an elected politician, a business person or NGO, or even in our daily tasks of paying bills, and shopping, or accessing news, both locally and nationally.

The questions of who should govern the Internet have not gone away, since the World Summit on the Information Society, concluded as a heads of state agreement in Tunis, in 2005. New technologies and their uses, and the uses of today's technologies remain subjects of debate.

Today, the Internet faces a renewed set of challenges. Some ask: If it is so important, why is the United Nations not in charge? As it has become more important, it also has many challenges to face, and so do we, as we attempt to devise the policies, the practices, and the accountability needed to ensure that the Internet serves its full purpose, but not become a weapon of any kind -- whether through being used to spread malware or viruses, spread false information or what we call "disinformation"; become a haven for cyber criminals or cyber-attacks, or for content that is harmful to minors.

Any tool can be used for good, or bad purposes.

We need to all be committed to working together to understand the current and future challenges to the Internet and its uses and access, and we must find ways to bring together different stakeholders to consider and understand challenges, and to identify solutions that are balanced, and responsible, but which also reflect and respect the core principles of an open and interoperable Internet. That is why I am so committed to not just the global IGF, but also to the continued growth and success of the national level IGF Initiatives, such as the Ukraine IGF. I founded the IGF-USA back in 2009, and was very privileged to be appointed by the IGF MAG chair to support and encourage the further development of NRIs, when I was on the MAG. When we began discussing how to "grow" more national level IGF initiatives, as Oksana will recall, there were only about 57, and very few had youth initiatives that were continuing from year to year. Today, only two years later, you are congratulated on another successful Ukraine IGF, and on your work in inclusion of Youth.

This kind of contribution that you make, both at a national level in engaging together to consider national level perspectives and then document them, and the contribution that you reflect into the global IGF is exactly the kind of enhanced cooperation and collaboration that is essential to the success of the Internet, and to ensuring that the views of your stakeholders are understood and taken into account -- both nationally, and in more global discussions.

I always want to be with you in person, but I am afraid that is impossible. Yet, please know that I am with you in spirit, and that I congratulate all of you. I look forward to your report, and to your continued influence into the Internet Governance discussions and debates that lie ahead of all of us. We are on a journey, and the role and functioning of the Internet will continue to face many questions -- some from citizens, some from policy makers in governments, and some from businesses and civil society. It is critical that we all continue our commitment to the multi stakeholder engagement of all affected stakeholders.

Marilyn Cade