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Remarks by
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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation in public
policy issues related to the Internet and the note of the Secretary-General on
continuation of the Internet Governance Forum
delivered by Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram
Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, I would like to introduce two reports of the Secretary-General. The first is the **report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet** (E/2009/92).

The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/202, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council, in consultation with relevant international organizations, on how enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet should be pursued.

This report, which contains an overview of progress and suggestions from ten institutions, was transmitted last year to the Council. The Council decided to defer consideration of the item to its 2010 substantive session and meanwhile to seek the advice of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) on this issue.

CSTD reviewed the matter of enhanced cooperation in the context of follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at its 13th session in May 2010. The Commission had before it E/2009/92 along with an update on activities undertaken by the relevant institutions to promote enhanced cooperation in the last two years, which is being circulated today as E/2010/CRP.4.

It is clear from discussions in CSTD and elsewhere that there continue to be a difference of views as to the means by which enhanced cooperation can be achieved and in which areas.

Some are of the opinion that deliberations in an international setting can best enable Governments to carry out their responsibilities in public policy-making on an equal footing.

Others are of the view that dialogue among Member States, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, possibly in multiple Internet governance mechanisms, including at the regional and national levels, is an effective means of enabling Governments to fulfill their roles in relevant areas of international concern.

Some perceive management of critical Internet resources to be of primary importance while others highlight the need for enhanced cooperation among Governments on connectivity, cyber-security, consumer protection and a range of other issues.

It is worth recalling that critical internet resources are usually taken to mean the addressing systems, domain name systems, root servers and routing tables that together handle the flow of communications traffic. The main issues appear to be security, continuity, stability, coordination, control and capacity, and democratic governance of the critical internet resources in particular.

Who owns these resources? Who benefits from them? Are they secure? Where are they located? These are some of the questions that have arisen.

In its draft resolution entitled “Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society”, the Commission is recommending that the Council pursue the issue by inviting the UN Secretary-General to convene open and inclusive consultations involving all Member States and all other stakeholders to proceed with the process towards the implementation of enhanced cooperation in order “to enable Governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet,” as called for in the Tunis Agenda.

CSTD recommends that these consultations be held before the end of 2010 and that a report on the outcome be submitted to the 66th session of the General Assembly through ECOSOC.

Should the Council decide to request the Secretary-General to clarify modalities for pursuing enhanced cooperation on particular public policy issues pertaining to the Internet through consultations with Member States and other stakeholders, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) will provide its full support. The Department welcomes further guidance from the Council on how best the Secretary-General could assist in the important matters at stake.

The second report that I would like to introduce is the **note of the Secretary-General on continuation of the Internet Governance Forum** with the dual symbol E/2010/68 and A/65/78.

In order to better understand the issues related to Internet governance and promote dialogue among stakeholders in an open and inclusive manner, Member States decided, in early 2006, to establish the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), convened by the Secretary-General. The main function of the Forum is to discuss public policy issues relating to key elements of Internet governance, recognizing that Internet governance includes more than Internet naming and addressing. It also includes other significant public policy issues such as,

inter alia, critical Internet resources, the security and safety of the Internet, and developmental aspects and issues pertaining to the use of the Internet.

When the Forum was created in 2006, it was given a lifespan of five years, after which Member States would review the desirability of its continuation. In paragraph 76 of the Tunis Agenda, the Secretary-General was asked to examine the desirability of the continuation of the Forum, in formal consultation with Forum participants, within five years of its creation, and to make recommendations to the United Nations membership in that regard.

Accordingly, the Secretary-General has examined the merits and shortcomings of the Forum taking into account the views of its many participants. These opinions were solicited through an online questionnaire, a note verbale addressed to all diplomatic missions accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva and, in November 2009, a formal consultation with IGF participants convened by DESA during the fourth meeting of the Forum, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Given the views expressed by the General Assembly last year in resolution 64/187 on the question of stakeholder dialogue and the strong support for an open discussion forum on public policy issues related to Internet governance among those who participated in the consultations, the Secretary-General is recommending that the Assembly consider extending the mandate of the Forum for a further five years, with a number of improvements.

First, Member States may wish to review the agenda of the IGF and identify the international public policy issues it views as most pressing, given the tremendous technological changes that have taken place in the five years since WSIS, including the emergence of social networks.

At the same time, it has been pointed out that the Forum has not given sufficient attention to the development and human rights dimensions of Internet governance. The Forum has yet fully to address concerns of developing countries, including the digital divide and continuing challenges faced by developing countries in using the Internet for development.

The Council may wish to advise the Assembly on the priority issues in the next five years in light of current development trends and objectives.

Second, Member States may wish to consider the effectiveness of the Forum and the means by which the IGF could better contribute to international and national public policy-making. There is room for the IGF to consider public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and the General Assembly shall provide guidance. An improved IGF should also produce outputs that promote better understanding of issues related to Internet governance to facilitate national and international public policy-making.

Third, Member States may wish to take note of the scope and level of participation of the various stakeholder groups in the IGF and consider whether additional steps should be taken to engage a broader range of development actors in Internet governance mechanisms. Eighty-three of 192 countries sent delegations to the fourth meeting of the IGF last year. Some 110 Member States did not participate. A majority of these were developing countries.

Attendance figures for other stakeholder groups are similar.

This is a fundamental weakness of the Forum, which undermines its meaning. As the fifth anniversary of WSIS draws near, the continuing lack of participation by governments and stakeholders from developing countries in the Forum risks eroding the inclusiveness and representativeness of the Forum.

Are there ways to redress the imbalance by bringing stakeholders from more developing countries to the Forum, especially those in a position to contribute to Internet-related policy-making?

Finally, the Secretary-General is inviting the Council and the Assembly to reflect on how to improve the format, functions and operations of the Forum, with a view to enhancing inclusiveness, transparency, effectiveness and cost-efficiency while ensuring balanced stakeholder representation and participation.

The Secretary-General's recommendations, contained in this note, are addressed to the General Assembly as the most representative body of the United Nations membership to assist Member States in their decision on continuation of the IGF and its improvements. The recommendations of the Secretary-General have also been transmitted to ECOSOC given the Council's role in providing advice to the Assembly on development issues and related consultative mechanisms.

I look forward to the Council's deliberations and guidance.

Thank you.