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Opening Address by
MR. SHA ZUKANG
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
delivered by
MR. JOMO KWAME SUNDARAM
ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
TO THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM
<u>**Vilnius, Lithuania, 14 September 2010**</u>

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure to be with you in the historic city of Vilnius for the fifth meeting of the Internet Governance Forum. On behalf of Sha Zukang, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, I would like to thank the Government and people of Lithuania for their warm welcome and gracious hospitality.

The theme of this gathering is "developing the future together". Considering all that has been achieved in the last five years, this is a fitting refrain. It embodies the spirit of the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and reminds us that we are here in pursuit of human development and a better future.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in early 2006. Since then it has helped government ministers, civil society representatives and UN agency leaders to understand the challenges and potential solutions to the digital divide. The Forum's central aim is to afford all people the benefits of the Internet.

At this fifth meeting of the Forum, we will push discussions further and cover new ground. Your insights into topics such as management of critical Internet resources, security, openness and privacy, access and diversity, and Internet governance are as relevant as ever, as are your views on the emerging issue of cloud computing.

This meeting is especially timely because next week the United Nations will convene a summit in New York in order to accelerate global action on the Millennium Development Goals. More than 100 Heads of State and Government are expected to attend, along with leaders from the private sector, foundations and other civil society organizations.

With only five years left until 2015, we need to work urgently towards achieving the Goals. There are so many ways that the Internet can help developing countries reach them.

Through both simple and sophisticated techniques, the Internet can help eradicate poverty, educate people, sustain the environment and create healthier populations. Let us recommit ourselves at this Forum to identifying the barriers that prevent stakeholders from using the Internet for development and suggest ways to bring down those barriers.

Globally, there were some 1.8 billion Internet users by the end of 2009, according to the International Telecommunications Union. About 60 per cent of them were in developing regions, up from about 30 per cent six years ago. Internet usage has increased sharply in the last few years in all regions. Between 2005 and 2009, the number of users in Africa surged from 16 to 69 million, in Arab States from 26 to 64 million in Arab States, in the Asia-Pacific region from 347 to 744 million and in the Commonwealth of Independent States, from 30 to 99 million. In the Americas, the numbers of users went from 322 to 447 million and in Europe, from 277 to 387 million.

Sixty per cent of people in developing regions have cellular telephones and more and more are using mobile broadband. These numbers are indeed cause for some celebration.

And yet... other metrics show that the digital divide between developed and developing regions has been widening. For example, in 2005, there was a 43 per cent gap in the proportion of people using the Internet between developed and developing countries. By 2009, the gap had widened to 49 per cent. In 2005, there was a 4 per cent gap in the proportion of people with mobile broadband. By 2009, the gap had widened to 37 per cent.

This tells us that that while developing countries are making progress, developed countries are moving even faster. Let us use this IGF session to brainstorm on how to rectify this disparity. What strategies work best when it comes to expanding Internet and broadband access? How can we best influence policy-makers? We need your regional and national input, experiences and suggestions.

Feedback from participants from the least developed countries and countries emerging from conflict will be especially valuable in discussions on Internet service during disasters and crises. I hope they will speak openly and often in this session and others.

Digital inclusion and multilingualism, which will be discussed in the session on access and diversity, continue to be paramount. The reach and power of social networks adds new dimensions to these issues - help us to deepen our understanding on these topics, especially with regard to how poor and vulnerable populations that may be positively or adversely affected.

Discussions will also centre on the freedom of expression and the right to privacy in personal, national and international contexts. I look forward to a dynamic debate among the security specialists and philosophers in the session on security, openness and privacy. Cloud computing will add a interesting new twist to these issues.

As most of you are aware, the five-year mandate of the IGF expires this year. The Secretary-General has recommended that the Forum's mandate be extended and that a number of improvements be made to the Forum. These matters are now before the United Nations General Assembly for its consideration by the end of 2010.

Excellencies, colleagues, friends,

The Internet can assist us in reaching the Millennium Development Goals. It can help improve the lives of millions of people. Its governance is a serious responsibility. On that note, let us begin an engaging, illuminating and productive discourse.

In accordance with the custom of the Internet Governance Forum, I now have the honour to invite His Excellency Eligijus Masiulis, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, to assume the chairmanship of the meeting on behalf of the host country. Excellency, you have the floor.

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