

## WSIS Review UNGA Speech

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Madame President

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be here.

The Center for Democracy & Technology is a public interest advocacy organization devoted to promoting fundamental rights and participatory processes in Internet policy. We have been fully engaged in the WSIS review and I can say that we are encouraged by the outcomes text. It is indeed an achievement and the co-facilitators and all those stakeholders who have contributed to this process deserve our thanks and congratulations.

There is a sense of optimism and importantly direction. We have a clear of mission – that of realizing a knowledge society and substantively contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This is no small task. And, we are not going to be able to do this unless we work together, unless we innovate in terms of solutions, policies and partnerships, and unless we recognize the importance of empowering individuals and communities so that they too can contribute to achieving these goals.

Throughout the WSIS review there has been resounding support for stakeholders working together. The final text has captured the critical importance of

multistakeholder processes to the future of the Internet and to the work we have to do related to the SDGs. This said, to build a knowledge society and to contribute to achieving the SDGs we are going to have to do more than talk about the value of multistakeholder processes – we are going to have to live them, to put them to work and how they can deliver. Why? Because we really don't have any other choice.

We cannot expect to build a knowledge society nor meet the SDG targets stuck in our respective stakeholder silos. We have no choice other than to cooperate, collaborate, to bring our expertise, skills and know-how together and address these very real challenges through multistakeholder approaches. Effectively, we will only be able to deliver on the promise of a knowledge society and meet the SDG targets if we do so together, crafting policies and delivering solutions through processes that allow us to draw on the expertise and contributions of all.

To achieve these goals by 2025, this community is going to have to be far more innovative and ambitious, in terms of solutions, policies, capacity building, technologies and much more. We are going to have to look at ICTs and the Internet and how they will impact the SDGs far more holistically. Yes, connectivity is absolutely essential, but we also have to look at how those who are most affected by development challenges are equipped to address those challenges, locally and nationally.

We have to look at our policies and solutions and ask whether they are the right policies and solutions for empowering individuals and communities, creating opportunity and jobs, spurring innovation and entrepreneurship. We cannot harness the potential of ICTS for development if the policy environments do not encourage communities and businesses to build networks, enhance skills and create opportunity. And, it's not just about the technology – at the end of the day it's

about ensuring that individuals and communities have the tools and skills to be able to contribute to their own social and economic development.

Empowerment comes in different ways. It is not just through connectivity and access. Empowerment also comes through the realization of one's human rights and one's digital dignity. There is excellent language on human rights in the outcomes text. In paragraph 14 it states that we have a collective responsibility to work towards to realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. But, much like the multistakeholder language, we are going to have to do more than talk. What concrete measures are we, the WSIS community, going to take to work towards the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the recognition of the importance of human rights to economic and social development?

Finally, our work going forward is part of a bigger tapestry and a greater ambition. In December 2014, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon issued a synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda entitled: *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*. The very last words of the document are as follows: "we have an historic opportunity and duty to act, boldly, vigorously and expeditiously, to turn reality into a life of dignity for all, leaving no one behind." This I would suggest is our opportunity; and our responsibility.

Thank you.