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INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM USA 2021

WELCOME SESSION AND KEYNOTE

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>> Melinda Clem: We begin today with opening addresses from people who play a vital role in realizing the full potential of the Internet, for all Americans, and across the globe. From her time as governor of Rhode Island, Gina Raimondo had quality access to Internet for her citizens. She champions affordable Internet access for all Americans, encourages US participation and leadership in international communications and Internet fora, aims to strengthen

manufacturing and key Internet technology, and has several agencies reporting to her that are producing cybersecurity guidance. We are grateful for her time in recording this message and introducing our keynote address by Doreen Bogdan-Martin. It's my honor today to present the United States Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo.

>> GINA RAIMONDO: Hello, everyone. It's a pleasure to join you today, the Internet Governance Forum. I have the honor of introducing today's keynote speaker, Doreen Bogdan-Martin. As I'm sure you are all aware, Doreen is the director of the International Telecommunication Union at the Telecommunication Development Bureau. Her long public service career actually began here in the commerce department, at the NTIA.

At Commerce, we are committed to closing the digital divide. The pandemic exposed just how wide that divide truly is for so many Americans when it comes to broadband access. In the 21st century, broadband access and affordability isn't a luxury, it's essential. Essential for our jobs, our education, and our healthcare.

But too often, rural and underserved areas lacked basic cell service. That's why over the past few months NTIA launched three new grant programs to help connect our most vulnerable communities to high-speed affordable broadband. We have also launched a new broadband map that will help our build-out efforts. Because high-speed broadband that many of us take for granted, is still out of reach for many Americans. Disproportionately, those who are nonwhite and low income. There's no one more qualified than Doreen to help America and the world meet the demands of this moment. Under her leadership, the ITU development sector focuses on bringing digital connectivity to those who need it most.

Doreen understands that when people are cut off from high-speed Internet, they are also cut off from opportunity. And there's nothing she cares more about than expanding

economic opportunity so everyone can participate in today's modern economy and pursue their dreams in the digital age.

Her experience, expertise, and dedication over the years hasn't just benefited Americans. It's impacted people all over the world. As the first female director in the ITU's 153-year history, Doreen has been a champion for gender equality, addressing unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion, across the communications and technology industry.

She's also created an organization dedicated to empowering nearly 2 billion underprivileged youth from developing countries by encouraging their participation in the communications and the technology sector.

As our global economy recovers from the pandemic, it's time to close the digital divide, and Doreen is the best person to get the job done. I'm thrilled to support her candidacy to become the next ITU general secretary. Doreen, the floor is yours.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you so much, madam secretary. And thank you, Dustin and Melinda.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it's such a great pleasure to join you today from a chilly, rainy, gray Geneva afternoon. It's really great to be here to open the US Internet Governance Forum. I think it's fair to say that right now, we are all living through very challenging times as Melinda has just mentioned.

Over the past 18 months, we have seen the dial on broadband connectivity shift sharply from something desirable to something essential. In the face of lockdowns and quarantine restrictions, ready access to digital infrastructure has become a basic requirement for fully fledged participation in society and the economy. And for those of us lucky enough to enjoy a fast, affordable Internet connection, access to the Internet has actually been a sort of a lifeline for us. But let us never forget that nearly half of humanity, nearly half of humanity, still does not have this access. And that

hundreds of millions more struggle with an Internet connectivity that is simply too slow, too expensive, or too inaccessible to make any significant difference in their lives.

This is not just a developing world problem, and here, of course, in the US, analysts estimate that 25% of the populations still lack that home broadband connection and the FCC reports that even where broadband is available, 100 million Americans choose not to subscribe.

Around the world, we see a similar picture with certain groups, especially disadvantaged from rural dwellers, women, Indigenous communities, people with disabilities and, of course, people on low incomes. I think one of the greatest challenges ahead is going to be finding ways to deliver affordable, safe, and meaningful connectivity to all the world's people.

The UN Secretary General's digital cooperation roadmap which was launched last summer, represents, I think, a significant milestone in our efforts to develop shared strategies, to drive full digital inclusion.

The roadmap calls for universal, affordable connectivity by 2030, and I think that's a formidable challenge, because the latest ITU data shows us that progress and rolling out connectivity to the underserved areas is actually slowing.

In addition, we estimate that connecting all the unconnected by 2030 will require, of course, a huge amount of investment, in the vicinity of 428 billion, and that's just for the infrastructure.

So as we look at how to achieve our vision of a fully connected planet, I think one thing is absolutely certain, and that is that no one can do this alone. Reaching the 3.7 billion people that are still offline and the hundreds of millions more suffering chronic digital exclusion, really requires new thinking, new financing models, new multi-stakeholder partnerships, carefully targeted actions, and innovative, responsive and adaptive policies and regulation.

Right now, we have a unique opportunity, a unique opportunity to rethink and to reshape policy, principles, and regulatory best practices to guide post-pandemic growth. We need to nurture more inclusive and collaborative approaches across a growing number of stakeholders. And most importantly, in our efforts to tackle the persistent and growing global digital divide, we need to put people at the core of our policy and regulatory decisions.

At the ITU, multi-stakeholder partnership has always been at the heart of the way that we work. I think ITU is unique as the only UN agency with a membership that comprises not just the governments. We have 193 governments, but more than 900 leading tech companies, universities, international and regional organizations, ICANN, ISOC, the Internet registries, civil society groups, they are all members of the ITU, and we have been developing and implementing impactful multi-stakeholder projects with public/private and civil society partners for many decades.

ITU has a long and prized tradition of consensus-driven decision-making, from our global technical standards work which is a highly collaborative process, driven by experts from the private sector, and ratified by our Member States, to our online open consultations for stakeholders to provide inputs to international Internet public policy issues, and as many of you know, right now, our Council Working Group on the Internet is consulting on issues related to the role of the Internet in mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

Some of you also know that we regularly hold world telecommunication policy fora, known as WTPFs on issues of pressing concern to the digital community. We have our sixth WTPF scheduled for later this year, and it will focus on harnessing emerging technologies to reboot the SDG process, the Sustainable Development Goal, and to tackle global challenges like the COVID pandemic. And as you may have seen last week, the UN launched the SDG progress report and no surprise, COVID

has set the world back on many fronts and there's an urgent call for transformative action to leverage technology and innovation. And at the UN level, I think the ITU has stepped up. We're responding to this call by coleading a number of transformative initiatives with a broad range of stakeholders, one bold, new multi-stakeholder partnership that I'm particularly proud of is our Giga initiative with UNICEF and others to connect every school on the planet to the Internet and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice.

And since its launch back in 2019, the project has been accelerating very fast. Last year alone, we welcomed 10 new partners, including Ericsson, Dubai Cares, the Musk Foundation and many others. By the end of this year, we expect to complete a mapping for 36 countries to connect 1,000 schools in each of our priority 17 countries, and perhaps most importantly, to put in place the financial framework for an inclusive connectivity bond to raise those vital investment dollars.

We're also working with UNICEF on the implementation of the roadmap recommendations on global connectivity, and working on digital capacity building support programs with UNDP. Of course, we partner with many other UN agencies from WHO on digital health, ILO on digital employment opportunities, UN Women and international trade center on our equals global partnership to bridge the digital gender gap and, of course, as Secretary Raimondo just mentioned, our new youth initiative, which is called Generation Connect. It's bringing contributions of young people to the table and stimulating that needed global dialogue around the emerging issues related to youth and technology.

And I really think these kinds of large multi-stakeholder projects like Giga require a coordinated response, not only at the international level, but equally as important as they need to rely heavily on national and community or grass roots actions. And I think that's why national IGFs such as this one

are so important in energizing stakeholders through dialogue and also helping to formulate informed and effective actions.

Of course, the ITU has been a staunch supporter of the IGF since its inception back in 2005, alongside, of course, with the WSIS Forum, both of which were outcomes of the Tunis phase of the World Summit On the Information Society and, of course, since then, these two platforms have really worked side-by-side, complimenting each other's role with the IGF focused on the governance aspects of cyberspace, and the WSIS Forum focusing on the developmental aspects.

Now, as we look ahead to the shape of a future IGF plus, as foreseen in the UNSGs report on digital cooperation, I look forward to strengthening this partnership and drive broader participation from developing countries be it from LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, civil society organizations and from right across the increasingly diverse global ICT sector.

In his second term, addressed last month, Secretary General Guterres, stressed his commitment to a strengthened IGF, empowered to bring all stakeholders to go around the implementation of the digital cooperation roadmap and in reaffirming his commitments, he observed that we must never lose sight of our goal, an open, free, and secure digital future that embodied full respect for data protection, privacy and human rights.

And today's annual meeting of IGF USA, I think perfectly reflects that vision with key sessions on so many of the burning issues of the day, from data privacy, to security, digital identity, online markets, digital supply chains and the growing challenge of content moderation over social networks. So I'm really looking forward to the exciting discussions.

I do want to recognize as well the collaboration and the strong support that the ITU has always enjoyed from the IGF USA, as well as other US-based members of the digital including the ICANN, the registries, leading US tech companies and the US administration, which is one of our most proactive Member

States in ITU's work.

I think there's much to be proud of, but with COVID pushing forward, this new wave of digital transformation, none of us can afford to rest on our laurels. Just as the pandemic has reinforced our human interconnectedness, it has also shown us the vital importance of digital interconnectedness, and what it really means to be offline in our increasingly digital age.

We have heard that the digital divide is becoming the new face of inequality, and it's in our power to stop this from happening.

Universal connectivity would mean that no child needs to miss out on school. That no individual needs to lose their job and that no community need be disadvantaged simply because of the lack of a broadband connection.

And when the multi-stakeholder community came together in 2003 and 2005, to formulate the WSIS principles, it was with the belief that we had something special that needed to be protected and nurtured through multi-stakeholder cooperation, one Internet without boundaries, connecting us all.

And more than 15 years later, with the Internet now a crucial part of our lives and our economies, we face new challenges around security, privacy, online hate speech and the fragmentation of the Internet as we now know it. We must continue to advance and advocate for the principles that we affirmed as a community in 2005, and as before, the key to overcoming these challenges lies in coming together and working collectively in a spirit of openness and cooperation.

With our exceptionally diverse membership, ITU embodies the WSIS multi-stakeholderism, and we won't step back from that commitment of inclusivity. I know we can count on the support and the active efforts to build back better for a safer, more connected, and more sustainable world, a world where everyone has digital access that is safe, that is attractive, that is affordable, and where everyone is digitally empowered to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their

communities.

I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to join you today. Thank you.

>> DUSTIN LOUP: Fantastic! Thank you so much, Doreen for joining us and kicking off the conference and thank you for all the work that you are doing to get people connected. And so you know, keep it up, and, you know, we'll see you around, of course.

So with that, we're going to take just -- we're about two minutes ahead of schedule. So let's take just a quick breather here, and then we'll be back with the session on "Building Better Online Markets and Communities." Shortly.