

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**High-level roundtable on “Progress made in the implementation of and
follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit of the Information Society at
the regional and international levels”**

Statement submitted by

Switzerland

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**United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
22nd Annual Session, 13-17 May 2019**

High-level Roundtable on the "Review of progress made in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes"

Statement of Thomas Schneider, Ambassador, Head of International Relations Service, Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC), Swiss Confederation

- Almost every aspect of economic activity and everyday life is affected by rapid technological developments. **ICTs and digital technologies can play a pivotal role** in an ever-rising number of activities, and should be used to achieve the SDGs and improve our daily lives.
- **They provide new solutions:** Where appropriate infrastructure, skills, and services are available, they can be incredibly powerful, for example in food production, developing smart cities and traffic, improving education and healthcare, or transforming the way we do business.
- **However, things do not just happen – they are made to happen.** Governments, for example, need to employ a set of policies and **establish favorable regulatory conditions** in order to contribute to the implementation of the Agenda 2030. They should:
 - develop and regularly update digital strategies,
 - create stable regulatory frameworks,
 - make their strategies technology-neutral,
 - and enable new partnerships and innovative technologies.
- **Governments should stimulate demand for digital services**, e.g. by offering government services online. They should encourage local ICT start-ups, and bring relevant ICT training into education.
- **Digital education for everyone** - including women and girls - is vital, and indispensable to make full use of the opportunities provided by new and emerging digital technologies.

- We must **create an environment that favors the opportunities** offered by digitization and not see it as a threat in the first place.
- At the same time, we **can not ignore**, that digitization, in particular the processing of personal data, the use of automated decision making procedures and artificial intelligence may **not only change** our economies and societies for the better, but **carry risks** and may **create losers** as well as winners.
- While new technologies have always been an **inspiration** to develop and spread new **conspiracy theories**, it is **now more important than ever** – if we want to maintain and further strengthen people’s **trust** in digital technologies – to have an **open and inclusive debate** with all stakeholders about **how to cooperate and where necessary regulate** in the digital world in order to make sure that **not just a few people and companies** benefit from the digital opportunities but that no one is left behind.
- In addition, **digitization is increasingly linking very different policy areas** such as health, economics or education, which have traditionally been managed through processes that are independent of each other. In the digital world, we must **consider these interdependencies** when discussing themes, such as data processing or security.
- **Current multilateral processes** sometimes reach their **limits**, which is why **we need new forms of global digital collaboration**. We need to further develop multistakeholder processes to keep pace with digital developments. And **we need to be multidisciplinary**, as the UN Secretary-General said on the occasion of IGF 2018 in Paris.
- In this regard, Switzerland welcomes the launch of the **High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation** by the UNSG.
- We hope that this independent multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary group can **remove existing bottlenecks** and contribute, through **concrete recommendations**, to ensure that the many actors who discuss the different aspects of digital governance and make decisions according to their roles and responsibilities will collaborate in a more effective and holistic and more inclusive and accountable way - and develop pragmatic solutions.

- In our view, **digital cooperation should be human-centred, inclusive and embrace human rights and fundamental values**. This is a prerequisite for more digital trust, stability and sustainability.
- The **main principles** for such an improved cooperation should be based on our shared experience and best practices of **consensus-oriented decision-making, full inclusion of all interested parties, and leaving room for innovation**.
- We need **more flexible cooperation mechanisms** to ensure synchronisation of efforts, interoperability and policy coherence. Innovation must come from the grassroots and the edges. Good solutions can be scaled up but may need to be adapted to specific circumstances.
- We **need a better follow-up of our global deliberations**, and we need to find innovative ways **to develop global norms and guidelines, based on inclusive and transparent consensus building processes**, so that these standards and norms are acceptable by all actors. Support and capacity building that enable meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders is fundamental for this.
- We believe that any resulting innovations should build to the furthest extent possible **on existing institutions, processes and arrangements** – by creating a **network of networks** of institutions and actors that cooperate (and where necessary regulate) **bearing in mind growing interdependencies**. In this sense, **processes like the IGF** have importantly contributed to improve cooperation in the digital environment.
- **The IGF provides a great example** of how to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders in exchanging experiences and different views. From its early days, Switzerland has been supporting the IGF.
- We hope that the HLP may deliver bold recommendations that build on valuable experiences with existing processes, such as the IGF.
- We are convinced that if we **continue to develop collaboration among all interest groups**, we will succeed in creating together a global community in which everyone will benefit from new technologies and in which the digital gaps between "connected and

unconnected", between the sexes, countries and regions of this world will be less profound.

Thank you for your attention.