*"Digital Cooperation to Leave No One Behind:*
*Implementing the Secretary-General's Roadmap"*

*Side event at the 2021 STI Forum*

4 May 2021, 2-3pm EDT

Summary Note

In June 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General launched his *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* ([A/74/821](A/74/821)). Highlighting the challenges and opportunities of digital technologies, the Roadmap points out that mitigating the former and harnessing the latter will be a defining aspect of our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To that end, the Roadmap put forward concrete and people-centered proposals in key thematic areas such as achieving universal connectivity, digital inclusion, digital human rights and digital capacity-building.

The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, in close collaboration with key partners of the Roadmap implementation, held a side-event at the STI Forum 2021 providing an opportunity to update on and maintain momentum in the implementation of the Roadmap in the context of ongoing efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

The event was opened by H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Koba, Chargé d'Affaires, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations, who highlighted the timeliness and importance of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the crucial need to narrow the digital divide.

Invited panelists then shared their perspectives on the progress of implementing the Secretary-General's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, and on the work of the United Nations on digital cooperation, particularly in responding to COVID-19, achieving the SDGs, and promoting digital inclusion. They referred to the discussions at the President of the General Assembly's High-Level Thematic Debate on Digital Connectivity and Cooperation on 27 April 2021, as well as other digital related developments in follow-up to the Roadmap, and the relevant work of the STI Forum and its participants.

Ms Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant-Secretary-General and Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Envoy on Technology, thanked partners for their engagement with the Office of the Envoy on Technology in support of the implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and emphasized that the young Office is committed to ensuring an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach at this inflection point of the Roadmap's implementation.

Mr Vint Cerf, Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist, Google, reiterated Google's commitment to help implement the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation,

especially in the area of research and applications of technologies towards the achievement of the SDGs, and to work with different stakeholder groups in the public and private sector to that end, with the ultimate goal of an internet that is safe, secure, private, accessible, affordable, resilient, reliable and inclusive.

Ms Nnenna Nwakanma, Director and Chief Web Advocate, Web Foundation, appreciated the progress made so far in the implementation of the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, jointly achieved with the active participation of the civil society. She reiterated the importance to think and act outside the box in the digital age and to ensure language inclusivity.

Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the Development Bureau at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reminded that the Roadmap implementation requires a set of intertwined efforts in the areas of connectivity, policy frameworks, digital literacy, and locally developed content so that the power of digital technologies becomes accessible to and actionable by the digitally disenfranchised.

In line with the open and multi-stakeholder format of the United Nations digital cooperation work, the floor was then opened for comments from participants and engagement with the panel. Interventions from the floor featured a diverse group of high-level speakers from Member States, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and UN entities and demonstrated broad support of and engagement in the implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, including as a means to achieve the SDGs.

Key messages contained the importance of a paradigm shift in the digital age, 75 years after the creation of the United Nations, as aimed for in the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, with an emphasis on digital human rights, "leaving no one behind" and overcoming the gender gap.

Comments also welcomed the inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach continuously adopted by the Office of the Envoy on Technology and highlighted the significance of steppingstones for innovation, whole-of-society and open solutions, a strengthened Internet Governance Forum, of appropriate investment in digital public goods, and institutional trust-building among implementation partners. The provision of safe, secure and trustworthy technologies and the fight against cyberwarfare were equally underlined.