

Launch of the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation

Many, many thanks Fabrizio, and it's great to see the publication of the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation today. I know that for you and for many, this is the culmination of a huge amounts of work and we're very grateful to all those involved.

As you know, the UK has closely followed the work of this panel, and colleagues from across our government have been pleased to contribute to several of the working groups, including that on digital public goods, human rights and digital cooperation. It's a huge achievement, but it's the beginning of a journey in many ways and we're looking forward to going on it. It's been great also to see the way that the UN has taken such a multi-stakeholder approach and this has been on display again here today. It's clear that digital cooperation requires genuine and inclusive engagement with all stakeholders, and we've heard today from the private sector, we've heard from civil society. We really need to engage with these groups and doing so will make a real difference.

The other thing that's really struck me listening to contributors today has been how everyone has really focused on the impact of COVID-19 and the way that this pandemic has demonstrated that digital is not just an add on, but instead underpins so much of what we do today. Certainly from our perspective, the tracing apps, the public health advice, the research cooperation, the support for businesses and the need to assure communication and accurate communication information, all require good digital infrastructure. But we've also heard how many still do not have the benefits of these digital technologies. This crisis should refocus all of our attention on bridging the digital divide and connecting the unconnected.

It's also worth reminding everyone that the UK is a strong supporter of the Internet Governance Forum, and we welcome the widespread consensus around the IGF plus model during the working group discussions. We're really pleased to see actions in the roadmap to strengthen the IGF.

We also agree that human rights and fundamental freedoms apply fully in the digital world, and we welcome the initiatives being taken by the Human Rights Council in this regard. We should continue to raise the profile of human rights across digital cooperation efforts to encourage greater participation and engagement.

The high level panel and the roadmap have made a really valuable contribution in highlighting the critical role that digital plays in sustainable development too and the UK looks forward to continue to engage with all stakeholders in supporting the next steps in this work.

Finally, we've heard today from many of the speakers about the need to rebuild better in the wake of COVID. Digital technology needs to be at the

heart of this effort. We need to embrace the vision of making access universal and ensuring the technology is an enabler of all those things in this institution that we hold dear. Delivering the SDGs, enhancing human rights and ultimately securing peace. Many thanks Fabrizio.