UN chief highlights need for Internet governance to support innovation, prevent criminal use

18 December 2017 – Adequate governance is critical to realizing the vast promise of the Internet for a better world for all, Secretary-General António Guterres told the annual United Nations forum on Internet governance on Monday.

"The Internet, and new technologies in general, have an immense role to play in helping us address global sustainable development challenges," Mr. Guterres said in his video message to the opening of the 12th UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Geneva, Switzerland, which runs through 21 December.

"But there is a growing danger that the Internet can be used for polarization, division and criminal activity," he added.

This year's theme is *Shape your digital future!*

Mr. Guterres noted the Internet must serve to improve the human condition, which means bridging digital divides based on locality, means and gender.

"And it means establishing governance that supports innovation while respecting human rights and protecting society," he said.

The IGF is recognized as the widest-reaching international forum on Internet governance, and is at the forefront of identifying and debating critical issues that shape international agenda. Its mandate was renewed for 10 years at the World Summit on the Information Society (

This year's theme is WSIS) in December 2015.

The 12th IGF will discuss some of the most pressing Internet Governance issues today: Connectivity and Access; Impact of the Internet on Sustainable Development and Economic Growth; Human Rights Online; Gender Issues; Cybersecurity; Multistakeholder Collaboration at National, Regional and Global Levels; and Emerging Technologies, and Trends such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Fakenews and Virtual Reality; and many others. These discussions will act as inputs toward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which relies on robust and strategic use of ICTs and sound Internet policies.