Intervention Linda Corugedo Steneberg
Head of European Commission delegation to the WTPF
14 May 2013-WTPF opening session

- Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to be here this morning at the opening of this important event and I am honoured to address you all.

- The public's awareness of internet related policies is intensifying, and I am sure that this forum will prove to be another important chapter in the on-going global debate.

- Indeed, the parallel event in the building next door will discuss many of the same issues I trust that both these events together can contribute to develop an even better Internet for the future.

- On this point I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary General for setting up the multi-stakeholder experts group which has provided input to his report. The final result reflects perspectives from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society that need to be taken into account if we are to achieve any true consensus.

- Because it is only by preserving, this multi-stakeholder approach that we can safeguard much of what is good about the Internet that we know today – its incredible diversity, the rapid rate at which it generates innovations and the value it brings, both socially and economically to communities around the world.

- A lot of hard work, from a wide range of international

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actors has contributed to this achievement. We should acknowledge the vital role played by institutions and organisations which have helped bring the benefits of the Internet to users everywhere.

- Many governments too have played a valuable role in facilitating the open environment that nurtures such innovation, protects human rights and supports the multi-stakeholder model of decision making that underpins them.

- But this does not mean that all governments agree on the way forward. The outcome of the WCIT in Dubai in December was disappointing for the European Union and many other countries that value the multi-stakeholder model, but it did provide another opportunity for an exchange of views on the kind of issues that are important and sensitive for governments.

- I can be frank with you this morning – the European Commission stands firmly behind a model where governments are not the only decision-makers, possibly not even the main ones.

- This does not mean however that we are happy to live with a division between governments at the global level, on how the Internet's key decision making functions should be executed –

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- The Commission's Vice President Neelie Kroes has announced her intention to bridge this divide and create an alliance of like-minded states and other stakeholders that support the idea of a single, open and free Internet.

- And to achieve such global cooperation the European Commission understands how important it is that all countries deem they are in a position to participate and profit from the internet's benefits.

- To this end, we should all work to ensure that all stakeholders, including governments can find their way through the multitude of events and mountains of papers that such distributed governance mechanisms creates.

- The Commission believes that the better resourced countries should offer some sort of technical assistance vehicle to countries with fewer resources, a mechanism to digest information and make it useable. The European Commission is willing to play a very active role in achieving this objective.

- This week's forum provides a useful opportunity to identify issues that could benefit from such support.

- This is the time to focus on issues where we can agree and where we can work together to ensure the Internet continues to be the open, free and democratic platform it

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was born to be. Let's start by ensuring that the six opinions are adopted smoothly.

- I look forward to discussing with you how together we can succeed in bringing back consensus on the global internet scene.

END