**ED VAIZEY’S SPEECH FOR OPENING CEREMONY OF**

**THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF)**

**NAIROBI, 27 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Good afternoon. I was very pleased to be invited by the Kenyan government to speak at this year’s Internet Governance Forum – the first under its renewed mandate . Bringing together so many stakeholders from across the world and I must thank Minister Poghisio, his organising team, and the IGF’s Secretariat, for all their hard work in creating this event.

The establishment of the Internet Governance Forum was the most important outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005. It was initially considered by many as an experiment in governance. People asked how could it possibly advance awareness, policies, technical solutions and opportunities for something so critical to the development of the global economy and development – if it did not actually make decisions?

Your being here and the hundreds of stakeholders participating remotely through the global network of regional hubs provides the answer. You all appreciate the value of a forum that engages the full range of experts that ensure that issues are explored from all angles. That raises the level of understanding as to what can be achieved by whom and how.

Governments need to be here: we need to ensure that our policies keep abreast of what is happening in the Internet industry and the rapidly expanding environment of fast-moving technologies and network development. We need to know what is happening, what concerns the industry and users. We should not – and I believe cannot – adopt policy and legislation in a vacuum: the dialogue we have here helps ensure that we do not blunder into over-regulation and creating barriers to the kind of innovation that has kept the Internet dynamic and in tune with what users all over the world need and expect.

That is the fundamental concept behind the IGF – and I firmly believe it is right and has proved successful. But the IGF should not be static: it has to be flexible otherwise it could become formulaic and thus irrelevant. The Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group – the “MAG”” – allows it to adjust and evolve with every successive IGF - because this safeguards the interests of stakeholders in determining those issues that are critical to the development of the Internet which the IGF needs to address.

Governments could not do that alone. The UK was one of the first countries to establish a national multi-stakeholder forum – the UK IGF - and we have seen in recent years many countries follow our example. The replication of the IGF at the regional and national level all over the world demonstrates how that experiment has matured into established practice worldwide.

The UN’s Commission on Science and Technology for Development is now looking at how the IGF can further improve. That is a valuable exercise – there is always room for improvement - but I cannot see any consensus emerging for fundamental change. The IGF’s fully open preparatory meetings and related events are now well bedded into all our calendars. Through the active engagement and support of business and civil society, governments and parliamentarians, the technical community and academia, consumers, users and – most importantly - the next generation represented here by so many young people, - the IGF can only continue to grow from strength to strength.

This year’s IGF agenda is important. We face many challenges in ensuring that the Internet continues to be open, safe, secure, easy to use - and accessible to more people worldwide in all countries whatever the stage of economic development. People and businesses must be able to use the Internet and exploit its benefits with confidence, secure in the knowledge that their identity, personal data and intellectual property will be protected.

This is a shared responsibility that governments alone cannot fulfil. We need your help to inform our policy decisions.

Cybercrime by its very nature operates across borders. It is no use trying to tackle this menace at the national level alone. Only through stakeholders working together, through national administrations and law enforcement agencies cooperating more effectively, sharing knowledge and best practice, can we start to reduce significantly the threats of cybercriminals and thus the damage they do to our businesses and citizens.

Greater cooperation between all parties –between governments, law enforcement agencies, the ICT industry and civil society – will ensure that we combat these threats to cybersecurity, protect data and safeguard personal privacy and the identities of users.

It is also important for the IGF to look at emerging technologies and evolution of Internet services and he markets for those services. For example, cloud computing has brought about a step change in the economics and sustainability of ICT enabled service provision and it rightly deserves a prominent place in this week’s IGF programme. I will be following the discussions here in Nairobi with great interest.

Next year (2012) will see a major change to the landscape of the Internet with the launch by ICANN of an application round that will likely increase significantly the number of new generic top level domains – “gTLDs”. This will be a remarkable step change in the development of the domain name system that we expect to stimulate innovation and promote competition. It is vitally important that all economies – including developing countries - should look at the opportunities that this will create for them.

This major initiative has rigorously tested ICANN’s policy development and decision-taking processes – and is so doing has rightly brought the governments to centre stage in ensuring that this initiative takes proper account of all the public interest aspects – stability and resilience, rights protection, cultural, geographical and political sensitivities, consumers’ concerns about ease of navigation, the risks of criminal abuse….many issues that concern us all here. It is vitally important therefore for all stakeholders – including governments through the Governmental Advisory Committee – the “GAC” - engage in ICANN’s open and transparent processes - to ensure that domain name system remains dynamic and supportive of the global information economy.

I also applaud ICANN’s acceptance of the recommendations of the independent Accountability and Transparency Review Team established under the Affirmation of Commitments. It is important that these changes are implemented as soon as practicable and are seen to make a difference.

I have touched on some critical issues, many of which will be discussed at the London Conference on Cyberspace on 1-2 November when we will convene a meeting of ministers and senior industry and civil society experts from over 70 countries, with the aim of agreeing some norms of behaviour for cyber space. The sessions here at the IGF in Nairobi will help inform the discussions in London.

So I wish you well in all your discussions over the next 4 days – and I look forward to hearing how you workshop and plenary sessions have helped to move issues forward, to identify common approaches through your sharing information, views, best practice and solutions – technical and policy.

Thank you.