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HIGH LEVEL LEADERS MEETING OF THE 9ᵀᴴ INTERNET GOVERNANCE
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Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It would be difficult to find a better venue than Istanbul to discuss the current
Internet governance situation. Istanbul is city of bridges; bridges not only
crossing the Bosphoros and connecting Europe and Asia, but numerous cultural,
historical, and social bridges, too.

Today, in IG, we need bridges more than ever before. Many of them will be
virtual ones. We can learn from Istanbul; not only from its wonderful
geographical position, but also from its rich history. This city was the seat of two
of the longest lasting social institutions in the Modern era: the Eastern Roman
Empire, or Byzantine, and the Ottoman Empire. Both survived for centuries
despite being located in one of the most turbulent regions in the world. This has
not changed. While historians typically do not paint these two empires
favourably, one fact is certain: their long existence is evidence of their vitality.

What can we learn from them?

Our first lesson is one of merit-based and competent Internet governance. Both
empires were run for a large part of their history by highly competent officials.
Ottoman janissaries were recruited and promoted based on their merits. Both
empires knew what was going on in their vast territories. Today, in IG, we need a
lot of competence. We need more data and evidence on what we are discussing.
For example, do we know the scale of cybersecurity risks? Not necessarily. There
is a lot of guesswork in many areas of IG. Fortunately, there are more and more
initiatives aimed at evidence-based digital politics. WSIS has a measuring
initiative. The EU-led coalition has introduced the Global Internet Policy
Observatory. With the help of the Swiss government, we at the Geneva Internet
Platform are both analyzing data and making it understandable for all involved
in digital politics. Evidence-based policy-making will also be one of the main
themes of the Geneva Internet Conference which we will host on 18 and 19
November 2014. These are first steps. Much more needs to be done.

Our second lesson is one of inclusion. It may sound surprising, but – for example
- the Ottoman empire was, throughout most of its history, inclusive through
decentralization. At that time, it was not a matter of democratic proclamation but
a matter of necessity. Military might had its limits and the only way to run such a
vast empire was to give people a chance to run their affairs themselves (while
paying taxes to Constantinople, of course). Paradoxically, today, inclusion is not
only a value but also a practical necessity. If we want to preserve a unified

Internet, we need to give societies worldwide more say in how the Internet is governed.

This is where capacity building matters a lot. If countries and individuals do not have the skills, and the ways and means of participating, IG will remain - for many - just a possibility, and not a reality. We need to move from occasional courses to 360-degree capacity development where we help institutions and individuals to effectively engage in digital politics in a sustainable way. We also need to focus on all who are missing today, such as digital grassroots movements worldwide.

Our third lesson is the need to engage, listen, and ultimately reach a compromise. Wars and battles are often reported from the history of Istanbul, but this city was a place where different cultures engaged, negotiated, and achieved modus vivendi. Today, in an attempt to build Internet bridges, we need empathy aimed at reaching compromises that will ensure the future growth of the Internet.

In conclusion, we hope that these three lessons will inspire our discussion over the next four days;
   - First, the need for merit and evidence-based Internet governance
   - Second, inclusion through 360-degree capacity development
   - And finally, third, a readiness to listen and engage aimed at reaching a compromise.

Thank you.