

**Address by Lynn St.Amour at the international conference “ICT FOR A GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE FUTURE” hosted by the European Commission, Brussels, Belgium**

**Panel: “The role of ICT to ensure a global sustainable future”**

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Dear Commissioner Reding, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here in Brussels to address you today. I would like to thank our hosts, the European Commission and the Club of Rome, for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

First, a word or two about the organization I represent.

The Internet Society is an independent, international, nonprofit, cause-based organisation established in 1992 by two of the fathers of the Internet - Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn. We are dedicated to the stability, continuity, and advancement of the Internet for the benefit of all people. We work to advance critical Internet technologies and best practices, provide information, advice, and training programs, and promote national and international policies that support the growth and improvement of the Internet throughout the world.

We provide the organizational home for the groups responsible for Internet standards and protocols, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF).

The Society has more than 80 organisational and more than 28,000 individual members with over 90 chapters around the world, including a Chapter Coordination Council here in Europe. We are located in Washington, DC, and Geneva, Switzerland, with a distributed workforce in 12 countries including Regional Bureaus in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

This conference asks: “How can ICT durably contribute to the wellbeing of all citizens around the world?” And, the Paradiso Reference document talks about a paradigm shift - a new concept of equitable, sustainable progress and development, based on revised objectives in economic, social, and environmental spheres.

In what may be a surprise to some, the Internet Society, the IETF, and the inventors of the Internet have always had this paradigm shift in mind, not as a consequence, but they saw the free flow of information as an enabler of increased well-being for individuals and for society as a whole. So, naturally, I am very excited to be involved in this effort.

ISOC's mission is to promote the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. At the Internet Society's creation in 1992, many people may have considered this mission more optimistic than prescient.

But when launching ISOC, Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn remarked that “a global renaissance of scientific and technical cooperation is at hand”. How true that statement was then; and its truth rings louder today. The Internet has enabled collaborative research across all disciplines (not only scientific and technical fields), allowing for an unprecedented sharing of information, cooperation, and collaboration that continues to build humanity's knowledge and our awareness of ourselves and our environment.

The Internet has become central to societal and economic development at the level of the individual, as well as at national, regional, and global levels.

The IETF (which is by the way, 22 years old) also has a Mission statement, which includes the following:

*The IETF community wants the Internet to succeed because we believe that the existence of the Internet, and its influence on economics, communication, and education, will help us to build a better human society.*

Indeed, we all believe that by creating opportunities for people to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate, the Internet will play **a key role** in bringing about a more EQUITABLE, sustainable future for all of us. Issues or interests that once were the purview of the few are now within the grasp of the many, and their voices can now be much more readily heard.

The Internet is like no other medium (and I make a distinction here between the world wide web and the Internet, as the web is an application enabled by the Internet, albeit an application of astonishing influence and importance). The Internet has encouraged community building and networking; it bridges divides and creates unparalleled experience sharing. It has allowed communities of interest to proliferate around issues ranging from the very local to the truly global – the same application that helps you stay in touch with your neighborhood activities can also help you build a business with a global reach – from anywhere, or track the latest developments in agricultural processes, social sciences or green developments.

At the Internet Society we have been involved since our inception in capacity building, through Internet education and technical training around the globe. We have witnessed first hand how the availability of information and know-how enables great things. We recognize and understand that change is driven by empowered, involved individuals and communities – and we KNOW that the Internet is a fundamental enabler of change, supporting individual's needs and the opportunities they see.

Today, the world is witness to an unprecedented groundswell of civic involvement in the future of society and the environment. Empowered and involved citizens and communities, collaborating and cooperating around the globe – and using the Internet as their communication medium – are bringing about a pervasive and global awareness of issues related to inequality, resource scarcity, sustainability, and opportunity. We need distributed concerted actions.

So, if we accept that the Internet is essential to a sustainable future, what can we do to ensure that this incredibly successful, breathtakingly useful medium continues to evolve in a way that allows future users around the world to build upon, benefit from and use it to improve their lives and our world?

The voices of those on the front line of Internet development tell us of the incredible value that the Internet, and its underlying principles, brings to them, from encouraging communication, to enhancing openness, supporting choice, enabling creativity, and empowering community.

These benefits radiate out to the edge (to the user and consumers) – which is, of course, vital. And, at the same time, our world is an increasingly complex place. As the volume of data and information we can access increases exponentially, so too does the task of analysis.

But the power of the Internet itself is now being harnessed to allow researchers and scientists to virtually extend their laboratories. Distributed computing techniques allow ordinary computers connected to the Internet to help solve extraordinary problems. Citizens with no academic training can play their part in tackling some of humanity's biggest challenges by allowing their computers' downtime to be put to productive use.

The Human Genome Project decoded the very essence of our being, using this approach. Distributed computing projects are also underway to help us create more effective medicines, develop better understanding of epidemics, and build more sophisticated climate models.

These types of projects, which have such enormous potential for improving the lives of people everywhere, are only possible with open standards, open networks, and collaborative models of development. The Internet both arose from, and taught the world about, this way of working. There was nothing like it before, **and** there has never been a more important time in history to learn its lessons.

In the Internet community, we talk a lot about the open, collaborative Internet Model and it is worth spending a moment on it here, because the success and value of the Internet unequivocally lies in its development and management model.

The Internet is a network of tens of thousands of networks, drawing overall resilience from this distributed responsibility.

It works because of the collaborative engagement of many organizations and individuals from across the world. People and organizations from many backgrounds and with different expertise are involved: private sector, civil society, government officials, academics, and researchers.

The development of the Internet is based on open standards, mainly developed through the IETF. They are openly developed, and broadly and freely distributed. Participation is based on knowledge, need, and interest, rather than formal membership.

And finally, the Internet Model is based on widely supported key principles, such as the “end-to-end principle,” which supports the global deployment of innovative and often surprising

applications. Those who create applications don't need permission to deploy them on the Internet. And perhaps most importantly, users themselves choose which applications best meet their needs (hopefully with no intermediate filtering).

The openness and transparency of the Internet's technical development, its associated policy development and management processes, are intrinsic to the success of the Internet itself, and to maintaining the global Internet.

The Internet's development has always depended upon and involved broad and diverse inputs. This is essential, as the Internet is a platform on which individuals, organizations, and consumers themselves build the infrastructure and services that are then globally accessible.

As the Internet grows and continues to spur economic and social development around the world, the policies and practices of tomorrow must grow from the shared principles and the shared vision that gave us the Internet.

This global platform has enabled an unprecedented scale of human communications, revolutionized how we express ourselves and collaborate, and in so doing has already contributed unimaginably to the wellbeing of citizens around the world.

However, for ICT to durably contribute to the wellbeing of all citizens around the world, we all must work to ensure that:

1. people have unfettered, affordable access to the network, whether from PC's, phones or other devices, and can choose from a diversity of suppliers, services, applications, and products;
2. the communications environment is unencumbered by excessive governmental or private controls;
3. the services and applications are trusted, reliable, and stable; and
4. the user's identity is sacrosanct.

Effectively, the Internet thrives, and its contribution to society is greatest, when conditions ensure that users have the ability to freely:

- Connect
- Communicate
- Innovate
- Share
- Choose, and
- Trust

To understand why these abilities are so important, we must recognize that technologies and infrastructure are required for progress, but do not **drive** progress. People drive progress, and their needs and the opportunities they see, drive applications, solutions and innovations.

A model exists for the paradigm shift called for in the Paradiso document. It is the Internet Model. The Internet Model shows how equitable, sustainable progress and development can

be achieved.

But we cannot take the Internet Model for granted. Governments that appreciate the benefits the Internet Model brings must understand how the key abilities I described are affected by both the opportunities governments create and the restrictions they resist.

The Internet continues to evolve at a pace that has exceeded virtually all expectations, and defied most predictions. It continues to amaze us in terms of the technology, what it allows users to do and to create, and in the way that it empowers users and communities around the globe. And while the Internet's emergence was unpredictable, it was not an accident, but rather the outcome of vision, commitment, collaboration and the faith or perhaps courage to let it develop organically.

We live in exciting times. On many fronts, we now face some of the greatest challenges in humanity's history.

"Hope" is a word that has been popular this past year. But, we are fortunate, we have more than hope.

In the Internet, and the Internet Model, we have the most powerful tools and methods that have ever been at our disposal. Tools and methods to learn. To analyse. To communicate. And to understand. Tools and methods that are flexible, responsive, and through enabling mankind's creativity - self-developing. We have tools and methods to bring together the power of people's creativity like never before – assuming we unleash the power of the individual through the use of ICT to make a contribution, to truly make a difference.

It is easy to make the mistake of talking about how the Internet **was** developed. The Internet **is** developing. And if we heed the lessons of its short history, it always will continue to develop restricted only by our imaginations.

The genius of the Internet is that its decentralized architecture maximizes the power of individual users to choose (or create) the hardware, software, and services that best meet their needs. If the Internet is to continue to be a platform for innovation and creativity, its open, globally addressable, decentralized nature must be preserved.

I cannot emphasize this enough; **this** is what gave us the Internet; it is fundamentally what makes the Internet "the Internet".

As we stand before these big challenges, it is vital to preserve the conditions that sustain Internet development, for by so doing, we preserve the conditions by which we can use the Internet to help sustain our own progress and development.

Ladies and gentlemen it has been a great pleasure. Thank you for inviting me here today.