

**PANEL 2: Information and communications technology gaps and areas for continued focus, and challenges including bridging the digital divide**

***Remarks of Cheryl Miller, Verizon Communications***

Good Afternoon, Your Excellencies. My name is Cheryl Miller, and I am the Director of International Public Policy and Regulatory Affairs for Verizon Communications. It is an honor to be here, and I want to thank The President of the United Nations General Assembly and his staff for the opportunity to address this important topic.

Verizon has been actively involved in all aspects of the WSIS processes, and we are pleased to be able to participate in these consultations. As we work to fill gaps and bridge the digital divide, it is crucial that business plays a meaningful role in these multistakeholder consultations. The whole Internet community—governments, the private sector, civil society the technical community and others – must work together to ensure a safe, secure, open, interoperable, and global Internet as a platform for sustainable economic development.

At its core, Verizon's business is very simple—it's about people— because our technology is aimed at improving the lives of the people that we serve. But serving people globally, particularly in developing countries, can present certain challenges. We view the implementation of the development goals as a key component in empowering Internet users around the world. One important goal that will help us to achieve many others is expanding internet infrastructure and connectivity to all users around the world. As we bridge the gap to the digital divide and connect people around the globe, we will also close other societal gaps, such as improving access to affordable healthcare, enhancing educational opportunities, expanding entrepreneurship, and becoming more energy efficient.

Verizon continues to innovate to overcome barriers to connectivity, and we are proud to work with start-ups to partner on creating powerful answers in response to some of the biggest, global Internet challenges. One recent partnership is with Sesame Enable, a start-up that is working to make touchscreen devices more

accessible for people living with paralysis. Sesame developed a handset pre-loaded with hands-free software that can track a user's head movements and replicate the touch actions a user would normally make with a finger. Sesame Phone has the potential to bring those living with paralysis or debilitating illnesses such as Parkinson's or arthritis greater independence and access to online innovations that will improve their lives.

Bridging the digital divide brings with it additional challenges and responsibilities for business, and Verizon is committed to partnering with other stakeholders to fulfill these responsibilities. We currently partner on many important initiatives such as protecting children online and encouraging young women and girls to pursue careers in STEM. Programs such as Tech Girls and Girls Who Code are positively impacting the STEM experience for many young women. Women are important contributors to the Internet community as a whole, which is why we must close the gender gap.

Now for the important question—together, how can we achieve all of this?

- First, it is important to develop policies that foster infrastructure investment and continued innovation. Maintaining a flexible policy environment will enable the continued growth of M2M and the Internet of Things, technologies that can help us with our gap filling.
- Second, we must continue to work with our partners in developing countries to better understand their unique needs. Not all countries are alike—they differ in culture, geography, and resources, and it is important to not force one-size fits all policy approaches across continents.
- Third, as a community, we must continue to work together and ensure that transparency, openness, and meaningful inclusion guide our processes. The multistakeholder model is an important structure for our own learning and interaction, which is why fora such as the IGF are important. The ability to take part in the IGF's "knowledge laboratory environment" has helped Verizon to better identify gaps, discuss solutions, and share best

practices for the many challenges we face in connecting the next billion. The Internet community's continued support for the multistakeholder model is an important tool in building a global and sustainable Internet society.

Thank You.