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MESSAGE

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I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you attending this important Forum. I am grateful to the Ministry of Security and Public Administration of the Republic of Korea, particularly to Minister Jeong-bok Yoo, for supporting this international gathering, and for his Ministry's steadfast support to the United Nations Project Office on Governance.

That office, known as UNPOG, is at the forefront of promoting innovation and e-governance in the Asia and Pacific region in support of sustainable development and the post-2015 Development Agenda.

I regret that due to prior work engagements, I am unable to join you in person in Seoul - a modern, efficient and dynamic city, most befitting venue to convene this Global Forum.

This Forum's theme is centered on smart government and smart society: openness, sharing, communication and collaboration. With 2015 fast approaching, the global community is focused on accelerating efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This Forum provides a timely opportunity to examine how initiatives aimed at improving governance can help expedite the achievement of unmet development goals, and how they can contribute to deliberation on the post-2015 development agenda.

Transparent and efficient governance is vital if national development strategies are to be effective. If the bedrock of a government is not sound, the lives of the poor and vulnerable will not improve, and progress in achieving the MDGs will falter. Achievement of the MDGs must be built on adequate commitments, sound policies, accountability, and improved governance and public administration.

We live in highly interconnected societies where Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are radically transforming the way that governments deliver services to their citizens - from traffic advisories to health care and public security. They are changing the very foundations and paradigms of public service delivery.

Today the range of internet-based and mobile technologies that exist for public administration is staggering. Many were not available to us just five or ten years ago. The proliferation of ICT products on the market grows daily.

The benefits of these changes are manifold. ICT tools expand the number of people that can be reached, educated and served. They increase opportunities for citizens to participate in public policy. They can give new opportunities to people who were once excluded because of their geographic isolation, poverty or lack of education.

Our host country, for example, implemented successful e-government projects individually managed by multiple government ministries and agencies. However, these non-integrated e-government systems eventually became inefficient and less than user friendly for its citizen users. In order to address this issue, a new government-wide enterprise architecture, or GEA in short, was established to provide integrated services to citizens, businesses, and government agencies. This new system has increased efficiency enormously. For example, processing time for an international trade transaction previously required 75 different stages over 4 weeks to complete. Now the same task can be completed with only 15 stages and within a week.

This innovative initiative was one of the winners of the prestigious 2013 United Nations Public Service Awards.

There are numerous similar examples in Asia and the Pacific region that have inspired and improved governance and public administration across the world. It is vital that governments learn from each other what has worked well and what has not.

This Forum is an excellent opportunity to exchange perspectives on how ICTs can foster good governance. I hope that you can adapt some of the innovative practices presented here back in your home countries.

I wish you productive and rewarding deliberations during the next three days.

Thank you.
