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TO LAUNCH OF E-DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE – APPROPRIATE USE OF E-TOOLS IN
DIPLOMACY

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today to witness this significant milestone on the launch of the e-Diplomacy Initiative.

The Internet has become a powerful and far-reaching tool of development in the last few years. Over a quarter of the world population has access to the Internet now, and it is estimated that more than half of the world's population will be online by 2015. We cannot ignore the fact that there are now close to 5 billion mobile phone subscribers around the world and the proportion of them with broadband subscription is increasing rapidly, underscoring the huge potential of mobile Internet around the world.

Similar trends were underscored in the 2010 edition of the United Nations e-Government Survey, which the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs recently published. Most countries have published a tremendous amount of information online, many going beyond basic websites to provide national portals that serve as a major starting point for users to connect to government services in different ministries. At the same time, many developing countries have identified the need to devote additional energy and resources to develop transactional services as well as the electronic means of engaging citizens in public consultation and decision-making. The upward trend in e-government development has accelerated despite, or maybe in part also due to, the current financial crisis and the pressing need for governments to be competent, transparent, accessible and efficient.

Indeed, the Internet transforms the reality of everyday life and it has become a critical factor of economic and social development. It could not be timelier for all diplomats to join the online community, whether to gather or manage information, or to communicate with their co-workers, or to reach out to their partners and clients through web tools. This E-

diplomacy initiative plays the important role to advocate and promote the use of web tools to help diplomats in their daily routine and ad-hoc activities.

We are privileged to be able to partner with the Governments of Malta and Switzerland and with the DiploFoundation on the initiative of the appropriate use of e-tools in diplomacy. Together through the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN), we serve to provide online information on international and national experiences, activities, projects and programmes, focusing particularly on how e-tools can help public servants and diplomats improve their effectiveness. We also aim to assist countries in enhancing their capacity through free online training courses offered in different languages on various topics in governance and public administration including e-government.

I look forward to a more enriching “online diplomatic community”, that all of us here can contribute, either as a user or as an advocate to encourage and help others, which all in parts will add up and lead to higher efficiency and effectiveness, and in turn will contribute to accelerated progress in the achievement of the internationally agreed development agenda including the Millennium Development Goals. Thank you very much for your support, Ambassador Borg.
