

**„GENEVA ENGAGE: e-participation for International Geneva“**

**27-28 January 2016, DiploFoundation**

**(Organizers: Swiss UNOG Mission / Cton GE / GIP)**

**Welcoming remarks, Ambassador Alexandre Fasel,  
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and  
International Organizations in Geneva**

**Mr. Director General of UNOG,**

**Mr. Couteau, Delegate of the Canton of Geneva for the International Geneva,**

**Mr. Director of DiploFoundation,**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**On behalf of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, let me warmly welcome you to the opening of the “Geneva engage” Conference, organized here at the Geneva Internet Platform, with the support of the Canton of Geneva and the DiploFoundation.**

- **Two years ago, I had the honour and the pleasure to be standing here, at the inauguration of the Geneva Internet Platform. Today, I am utterly pleased to see how well this Platform has developed, namely how successfully it operates in meeting what we then perceived as a need to set up in Geneva an impartial platform aimed at addressing all current questions related to the Internet and its governance.**
- **In this sense, I wish to warmly congratulate for this achievement Jovan Kurbalija, Director of DiploFoundation, as well as all his team – who, in organizing today’s (and tomorrow’s) conference, have once again placed on the agenda a burning issue: i.e. how to go about the right mix when discussing and deciding about questions that concern communities worldwide.**

- **To use a metaphor, you might know that the ideal number of persons attending a discussion is commonly understood to be 12. Today, in our digital world, there are more than 3 billion people who own a mobile or a smart phone, and who therefore can feel somehow concerned by ongoing discussions of any type. And to some extent they have a right to know what we are discussing here, since it has an impact on the lives of virtually everybody around the world.**
- **So the point is that E-tools need to be adjusted to a wide range of scenarios. They can support the work of a select and focused group, for example twelve negotiators around the same table. They can also support creating a highly inclusive environment, for example reaching out to the more than three billion mobile users worldwide and helping them to voice their views.'**
- **This conference, I understand, will thus explore – on the one hand - to which extent a center like International Geneva - with all its expertise and norm setting role - is, could, or should be connected electronically with communities worldwide when discussing and deciding about such questions as SDGs, migration, human rights, health, labour, trade and other policies on the world agenda. On the other hand, it will be interesting to discuss how much the in situ discussions as such are influenced by this type of interconnection.**
- **Do we welcome such an influence or not? How do we deal with it? What can we, International Geneva, gain from e-participation? What do we wish in terms of innovation?**
- **These and other questions, I trust, truly deserve to be discussed.**
- **I therefore wish you an interesting and very successful conference, and I thank you for your attention.**