



International  
Geneva



REPUBLIC  
AND STATE  
OF GENEVA

**Remarks by Mr. Olivier Coutau  
Delegate for International Geneva  
Republic and State of Geneva**

**Geneva Engage: E-participation for International Geneva  
Wednesday, 27 January 2016, 11:30  
DiploFoundation, WMO Building, 7bis Avenue de la Paix, Geneva**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**International Geneva is not only about Geneva. It is not only about the 30'000 people working here for IOs, permanent missions or NGOs. It is also about the rest of the world. It is also about the 7.3 billion people living in the world, outside Geneva.**

**In a few minutes time, the Director General of the UN in Geneva will tell us – I am sure – that "everything that is done here, in Geneva, has a direct impact on every person on this planet".**

**He is right, of course. And I do not need to explain that to you. But the question is: how do we make sure that all the persons concerned know that? How do we make sure that the farmer growing rice in Matara (Sri Lanka), the combatant in Kunduz (Afghanistan), the teacher in Juba (South Sudan) or the factory director in Zenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina) is aware of the decisions taken in Geneva?**

**And the next, equally important, question is how the same people can engage in the decision processes affecting them? How can they participate, make their voices heard, influence the outcome?**

**These are no little questions. What is at stake here is the relevance of the international administrative machinery in Geneva. Is this machinery well aware of what is going on in the real world? Are the expectations of the people taken into consideration? Are the decisions adapted?**

**Actually, I might be talking here about a very old word: democracy.**

**Do not worry: I do not pretend that e-participation can replace a world parliament. And I do not pretend that Geneva is currently completely disconnected from the rest of the world. But, still, I believe that e-participation can help. It can help to make international Geneva more accountable, more impactful, more relevant and, at the end of the day, more sustainable.**

**That is why the Canton of Geneva is proud to support this conference. My hope is that it will not be just another conference, but that, tomorrow evening, participants will have a clearer idea of what can be done and, above all, will be willing to do it.**

**I wish us all fruitful exchanges.**