

## Digital Response to COVID-19, 1 July 2020

Statement by Robert Rydberg, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Excellencies,

Let me begin by thanking Estonia and Singapore for arranging this meeting, as well as Estonia for the recent Arria meeting on cyber.

Digital issues are today the frontline for discussions in most fields – be it foreign and security policy or human rights, be it new technology to fight pandemics and to boost our economies.

Even before the present crisis, we saw the importance of open, secure and free connectivity. What this crisis has underscored that digital issues are anything but abstract: they are central to international affairs and global development.

Internet access is not a luxury: it is often the difference between having or not having access to healthcare, education and employment. In Sweden, as elsewhere, connectivity has enabled people to work from home, to keep studying and to receive healthcare advice online.

Connectivity creates possibilities. Connectivity allows entrepreneurs from all corners of the world to develop joint solutions to global problems in health and other fields. It enables youth from poor areas of the world to access content at the world's best universities. It enables health care workers from

Sweden has, through its international development cooperation, supported the development of digital capabilities since the 1990s. In the light of the current crisis, this work is taking on increased importance.

The sharing of knowledge, the ability to communicate freely and to collaborate around joint goals are key to driving innovation and finding solutions that enable sustainable development. The task is clear: to support and shape the development of the Internet as a force for good, finding innovative solutions to global problems, and reducing the risk of conflict and fragmentation of cyberspace.

We have much work to do to ensure that the international governance system can respond to these emerging opportunities. We need a stronger multilateral system. Leadership and coordination by the UN is essential. This is the time for collaboration, solidarity and for building back better.

In conclusion, Sweden welcomes the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation presented by the Secretary-General. And I wish to express our support for the Global Declaration on the Digital Response to COVID-19 that is being presented here today.

Thank you.