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GLOBAL CONNECT INITIATIVE MEETING

WORLD BANK, WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 14, 2016

Good morning, President Kim, Secretary Kerry, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I address you today as Chairperson of the Alliance for Affordable Internet - A4AI. This global Alliance, an initiative of the World Wide Web Foundation, has more than 80 members from civil society, the public and private sectors. Our vision is that everyone, everywhere will be able to afford a fast, reliable Internet connection.

Ladies and gentlemen, the exorbitant cost of broadband in much of the developing world is a major obstacle on the road to global connectivity. In some African countries, basic broadband costs as much as 58% of average income. The high cost to connect denies information, opportunities, and voice to more than two-thirds of the developing world's people. This exclusion from the digital revolution exacerbates inequality, further marginalising women, rural populations and the poor.

When the Internet is treated as a luxury good, we sacrifice economic growth, jobs, and human potential. In my continent, Africa, what we need is to accelerate development. On current trends, it will take nearly 30 years for the world's Least Developed Countries to achieve the same levels of Internet penetration found today in South Korea or the US. This is an opportunity cost we cannot afford.

To accelerate progress and make universal, affordable access a reality, we must act now. The good news is that we already have the tools and know-how to do so.

First, ensure that a national ICT plan is on the head of state's priority list. This plan must include concrete targets for affordability and universal access for women and men. Our



research shows that the current UN benchmark for affordability must come down by more than half.

Second, end the stubborn trend of digital inequality on women and the poor, by investing in public access solutions in poor communities, and digital skills education in public schools.

Third, replace shortsighted measures which ultimately penalise the poor – such as luxury tariffs on devices and services, excess royalties on technology patents, or multiple sales taxes on airtime – with a more long term approach that encourages the growth of jobs and innovation through a diversified ICT sector, and ensures that a fair share of the resulting revenues stay in the country where they are generated.

At A4AI, we believe that national vision and leadership are the most important ingredients for success. So let me be very clear: everyone in this room today has an important part to play – and we expect you to play it.

A4AI would be pleased to lead a multi-stakeholder working group to develop specific recommendations on investment best practices and strategies needed to achieve the global goal on universal and affordable access.

Honorable ministers, Secretary Kerry, President Kim: A4AI and the Web Foundation stand ready to work with all of you to make universal access a reality for ALL.

Thank you.