

Remarks by Fadi Chehadé at the Opening Ceremony of the 7th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum in Baku, Azerbaijan – 06 November 2012

We should give a big hand to the people who have been sitting here through all these speeches; so Under Secretary Wu and Dr. Ali, thank you. I am last, so I have to be quick because I stand between you and a fabulous lunch.

First, my big thanks to the people of Azerbaijan. If there are people from Azerbaijan here, you should know we feel very welcome. This is a great place to be, very warm hospitality. Thank you for that. Thank you for all the work you have put to make us comfortable.

Okay, so I'm the new ICANN president and I'm new and so it's a new beginning and a new season at ICANN. I say it's a new season because one of the things we are committed to do at ICANN is to open ICANN to the world and to bring ICANN to the world. So the first things we are doing are to demonstrate our commitment that ICANN is not an organisation that is limited by its geography. On a practical level, we are getting out of Los Angeles and we're going to the world, we're going to be opening offices around the world, sending our people around the world and reducing our focus from our internal operations to focussing on engagement.

So we brought on board Sally Costerton who is based in Europe and Dr. Tarek Kamel who will soon be based also in the Asian region so we can bring what we do and who we are closer to you, our stakeholders, the people we're supposed to serve and we're committed to do that.

The second thing we're going to do is to stop being a fortress. ICANN should be an oasis that people find as a great place to get their business done, to get their work done. We are going to remove the walls, we are going to make it easier to engage. One of the ministers here asked me, "How do we work with ICANN? Tell me how. We want to engage." We're going to make that possible by engaging, by inviting, by facilitating, by making our structures easier to understand so that all of you can be part of this great mission that we were entrusted with.

On that point, I want to be clear, I am now clear after having spent a couple of months on this: our mission is a limited mission. It is an important mission but it is a limited mission. We belong to an ecosystem of organisations that have roles in the internet. We do our part, they do their part. You saw as a beginning of this new season today when Secretary General Toure brought up how we will work together in this new season. His work at the ITU, the work that our friends at ISOC do, the work that our friends at the IETF do, the work that happens in all the organisations that co-ordinate together to make this possible is important.

My commitment as ICANN is to make sure we're open and we remove the walls and we're truly an oasis of partnerships of real work, of committed work. Finally, I just want to remind us why we're all doing this, why we're all doing this. We're doing this for two reasons: (1) I'm an internet entrepreneur and for 25 years

I've built internet-based companies and I've benefited from the internet. We should make sure that this opportunity that I had is available to all the children and all the youth on the planet who have the possibility to build their dreams on the internet today. This is why I am here because I want to allow others to benefit in the same way I was lucky to benefit from this great enterprise.

The second reason we're here is best embodied in the little girl Malala. Malala, at the age of 11, decided to write a blog and because of it today she lies in a hospital bed trying to live. It is for her that we need to keep this open, we need to work with all the organisations with a deep commitment that young people like Malala can continue voicing what is on their mind, what is in their heart and what they believe and together with all the organisations that I mentioned (the ISOC, the ITU, the W3C, the IETF), all the organisations of goodwill, we are going to make this happen. Thank you.