



Dear colleagues and friends,

For many across the world, 2016 was a year of unexpected turbulence, from on-going violent conflicts and the plight of refugees, to violent terrorist attacks in cities across the globe, to unexpected voting patterns the outcome of which raise challenging questions about the future of democracy. Unfortunately, news that helps us understand and media that helps frame and contextualise these and other developments, remain elusive.

The ICT4Peace Foundation – which celebrated in 2016 its 10 Year Anniversary - continues to bear witness to violence and conflict. We persist in our core mission to support and work with those with the power to affect change, better understand the contours of and solutions to complex, contemporary global challenges. Through our understanding of technology, we have endeavoured to provide strategic insight, informed foresight, expert input and innovative ideas in support of strengthening dialogue between actors, conflict prevention, mitigation and transformation across a range of critical domains. Over the course of 2016, our work ranged from leveraging technology to counter violent extremism at the local level, to addressing threats to cyberspace at the global level, marrying decades of expertise and real world experience with academic insight and diplomacy around complex, sensitive issues.

In accordance with its core mission of promoting a resilient, open, safe and secure cyberspace, throughout 2016, ICT4Peace further deepened its longstanding work on policy research and advocacy regarding to norms of responsible behaviour and confidence building measures in cyberspace. **It continued its cyber security policy and diplomacy capacity building programme for senior diplomats and technical personnel in cooperation with governments, regional organisations and think tanks.** ICT4Peace has organized a total of eight such regional workshops in the past years and four alone in 2016 in cooperation with the Organisation of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and with the Governments of Colombia, Kenya, Singapore, Thailand and the Lao PDR, who hosted the workshops. In the autumn, the Foundation was invited to brief an Open Arria Formula meeting of the UN Security Council on Cybersecurity and International Peace and Security. It also participated in a meeting on the topic of capacity building, cyber space and international peace and security hosted by UNIDIR and the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA) in the margins of the UN General Assembly First Committee's annual session.

In May, the ICT4Peace Foundation was invited to participate in a validation meeting around a study, led by **UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Geneva Academy on countering violent extremism and terrorism online, freedom of expression and the right to privacy.** This engagement, and others throughout the year focusing on local and regional efforts involving civil society and activists to combat the rise of dangerous and hate speech is guided by years of activism, advocacy and research by Foundation staff in Asia and beyond. Throughout 2016 and extrapolating from experiences in Sri Lanka, the Foundation remained deeply engaged in Myanmar, working with leading local collectives and individuals in Yangon and beyond to strengthen in-country capacities around the verification of social media, countering hate speech online, the production of counter-speech campaigns and data driven advocacy.

Complementing this work on countering violent extremism and in line with Foundation's core mission of promoting a resilient, open, safe and secure cyberspace, in April the **Foundation launched a joint project with UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) on Private Sector Engagement in Responding to the Use of the Internet and ICTs for terrorist purposes.** The project has engaged technology, telecommunications and social media companies across the globe, as well as a number of government representatives, regional organisations and civil society actors on a range of normative and technical issues relating to the topic. The results of this first phase of the project were presented around a

special session of the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) in November and will serve as the basis of a second phase of the project which will be launched early 2017.

The year also saw the launch of the **ICT4Peace wiki for the Burundi crisis**, providing timely and regular insights into the crisis in the country from trusted sources. In April, the Foundation offered its acclaimed course on social media information management, verification and digital security. The course responded to the real world needs of those at the frontlines of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, providing them with a deeper understanding of the vital tools, platforms and techniques that can be used to strengthen situational awareness and analysis.

As our work around crisis information management was winding down after eight years of active engagement that saw the **UN embrace the potential of ICTs in preventing, responding to and recovering from humanitarian disasters, we welcomed the launch of the Humanitarian Exchange Language (HXL)**. HXL is inextricably entwined with OCHA's Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) framework. ICT4Peace Foundation championed the concept behind HDX from the time of the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Further, a lot of the information featured in HDX comes from OCHA's common operational datasets, which the ICT4Peace Foundation helped support and develop.

Another highlight of the year was co-hosting the annual **Build Peace conference, held at ETH, Zurich**. Build Peace is the premier annual gathering of individuals and organisations interested in the use of technology for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Whereas so many others working around ICTs for peace focus on the technology, Build Peace presentations, keynotes and discussions focussed on intent, context, ethics and sustainability – issues that are still worrying, yet alien to so many working in this domain.

The Foundation was invited to present a keynote address at the annual **International Network of Crisis Mappers (ICCM)** held in Manila, Philippines, which the Foundation has supported and worked with for years in the domain of humanitarian response. We now host the ICCM's website, which attracts hundreds from around the world who interact regularly around issues related to policy, governance, technology, ethics, application and research.

From promoting peace and security in cyberspace, from supporting efforts to respond to the use of the internet for terrorist purposes, from preventing violent extremism to the verification of social media content, from the use of new media for situational awareness, from work around information management in the domains of refugees and protection to presentations made around peacekeeping sector reform and the use of new technologies, and from its focus on policy relevant research, the Foundation has been central to many pioneering and forward-looking discussions and processes over the course of the year.

We believe in the art of the long view. 2016 was for many, and with justifiable reasons, a disappointing, disturbing and bleak year. But as we look forward to 2017 and beyond, the Foundation sees no option but to move forward, building on measures taken to secure dignity, rights, peace and justice in cyberspace, and by extension, in all our lives including those most at risk of violence, discrimination, hate, hurt and harm. Our mandate is anchored to **Paragraph 36 of the Tunis World Summit of Information Society's 2005 Commitment**, which stresses how technology is inextricably entwined with peace, and the pursuit of peace. That has not changed for us. Through our work we envisage a world that is more secure, peaceful and just. Our humility stems from the understanding that we alone cannot make a difference. Our strength comes our ability to convene partnerships that tackle complex challenges. Our optimism is the result of working on complex problems and knowing that with political will, imagination and technical expertise, we can make a positive difference. Much has been achieved. Much more remains to be done.

May I also take this opportunity to thank our partners, well-wishers and supporters for contributing to the work of the Foundation.

Wishing you all a happy New Year,

Daniel Stauffacher
President
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