



Closing Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation

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My friends,

I would like to express my personal thanks. First of all, to the Co-Chairs. This does involve a lot of work, which these two fine people have put in and it really helped to make a difference, to create a greater understanding of what's going on and what needs to be done.

I also want to thank all the staff of UN DESA, people who've been involved in this here. Our Secretariat, we're very appreciative of the work they do every day, and it makes a big difference.

I'd like to express my thanks to the moderators, particularly Mr. Nasser. I'm delighted that he's been able to do this for us.

I think we're beginning to understand one of the big challenges. We talk about the divide - the divide between developing and advanced economies, the divide between women and men, the divide between rural and urban - but one of the traditional divides that we often don't talk about is the divide between science, technology, engineering



(STEM) and those people who don't feel comfortable or literate in those domains.

And particularly, if I may say, the divide between younger and older because younger have a much more immediate grasp of the technologies that are being developed and are coming alive. Older people, we walk around in a state of general bewilderment anyway, and now artificial intelligence makes it an even greater challenge.

So, for people who are really gifted, like our moderator, in communicating and making this change human and meaningful for people, and also showing that technology can be embraced and used by people of all ages and backgrounds and that it will be important for us to take this technology and make it ours, to in a sense, own it and own the challenge that we face – this is so critical that we not see this as something that is out there and belongs to only the big companies or to big capital and this is some kind of technological conspiracy that will take over the world – no.

Yes, the horse has left the barn, but most horses eventually have riders and saddles and they have ways in which we can try and tame them. So, our job is not to stop the horse from leaving the barn because, as Elina has said, they have left the barn. But our job is to make sure that we can turn this instrument into something that is not an impersonal machine, but as something that's impact is very connected to what we need to do and what we need to understand.



That will require good public policy. It will require a UN that is willing to create rules and guidance. It will also require a political commitment from everyone to, as one of the panelists said, share. Sharing is good, sharing is important. We have to do some very specific tasks at finding out where and how the next logical steps of engagement lie that will allow us to share effectively.

I'm very excited to be able to say that I know this question of how we can share effectively is going to be discussed at the next G7 meeting. It's something that the former Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, was very interested in. It's something that the new Prime Minister, Mr. Carney, is very interested in. It's something that will be discussed with leaders at the G7 – not just the 7 who are there, but many others who will be invited and many others who will be engaged with as we go from the G7 to the G20 to all of the other meetings that we are having this year to move forward.

Thank you all very much. We will be having another meeting in Geneva on AI for Good, which will be organized by the ITU, in the middle of July. There will always be a conference somewhere sometime on this subject because it's so critically important but the key is to take what comes out of those meetings and to actually do stuff. I think we all agree that doing stuff is the critical challenge that we face.

I've appreciated the opportunity to join you. Thank you all for coming, for participating. All the panelists, thank you. Merci beaucoup. Muchas gracias.