Remarks at the Signing Ceremony to Welcome China as a Founding Member of the Development Gateway Foundation, and to Launch the China Development Gateway

by
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I am delighted to be here today and to welcome China as a Founding Member of the Development Gateway Foundation.

I recall two pictures drawn by the children of Ningxia. One of the pictures shows children outside the school in Ningxia, with their books, reading and studying in the sunlight, and drinking in the knowledge that they can access. Like all children, they were hoping beyond hope that they would benefit from what they have heard of and dreamt of. The second picture -- a beautiful drawing by children -- captures their hopes and dreams. It shows a satellite dish, a plane flying overhead, and the children looking in wonderment, hoping that it would deliver to them their education, their future, their dreams -- the opportunity to share in the knowledge of the world and to connect with the world.

Last Saturday, I had the opportunity at the International Conference on Corporate Governance Reform to be able to communicate with Ningxia in the western region through Global Development Learning Network, and I am particularly pleased that for the first time, we are able to move beyond the capital cities to reach people who really need the benefits of this technology in rural areas. In the case of the Ningxia project, this would not have been possible without the strong partnership that the Government of China and the World Bank have developed with the Government of Australia, who is also a Founding member of the Foundation. We are together particularly grateful for the financial support that Australian Government provided to make this project a reality.

The Development Gateway Foundation is about these hopes and dreams. It is about making connections, sharing knowledge, leveraging development resources, and alleviating poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen, China's commitment to the Foundation, and today's launch of the China Development Gateway, are major milestones. China is taking a great step to make the dreams of these children and communities a reality. In a world where time and distance are shrinking, where boundaries are fast disappearing, and where information and knowledge are starting to reach to the far corners of the world, you are creating a new opportunity.
For years, as you know, knowledge and information throughout the world have been localized. And local knowledge is so critical, not only for the people who live in the countries, but also -- and even more importantly -- for those in other parts of the world who can gain and benefit from the value that knowledge exchange can bring.

China's rich civilization, its culture, its people, and its development can significantly help the global effort at reducing poverty. What better way than organizing this knowledge and experience -- that with the click of a button can be accessed, shared, and distributed. Again, with the click of a button one can also input data, content, and information that is timely and relevant and which can be refreshed at a fast pace.

I am impressed by the rapid progress that China continues to make in taking telecommunications far and wide in this country. This in turn provides the opportunity for Internet access ... which is reflected in the fact that China is the third fastest growing country in terms of Internet usage.

The China Development Gateway will be a strong part of the Global Development Gateway portal network, which is a place where knowledge and ideas come together. It is a place where one can --

• Discuss major topics of immediate relevance to development.
• Find projects and programs worldwide, by country and by sector.
• Access an online marketplace for projects and programs that are put out to tender. It is a place where information is provided so that those who in the past did not have an opportunity -- or did not even know that an opportunity existed -- can now take part in the business processes of countries, not only in the developing world but in the developed world.

The Development Gateway in China that we are inaugurating today is the outcome of efforts by a team that has worked so diligently to bring us to this stage, and I congratulate all of you for this excellent effort. It is a program that needs to be maintained and sustained, and I am confident that you, Mr. Minister, will give it the necessary care and attention. And you can count on the Development Gateway Foundation to do the same.

The Development Gateway Foundation, which is an independent, public-private partnership, supports not only the Gateway portal, but also the establishment of Research and Training Centers that can push the frontier
by coming up with cutting edge technologies and training programs to help the underprivileged have faster, easier, and less costly access to information and knowledge.

I am delighted that the Chinese government -- by joining the Development Gateway Foundation as a Founding Member -- has offered to host such a center of excellence and take on the challenge of developing and applying distance learning techniques. There is a great demand and need for distance learning in China, and I am excited that China is taking such a leadership role, as a member of the Foundation, to push the limits of this opportunity.

The Development Gateway Foundation is also about bringing together "thought leaders" -- from the private and public sectors, and from civil society -- to learn from each other about the issues and opportunities that surround the digital divide.

In short, the Gateway Foundation seeks to afford the use of information and technology its rightful place in the 21st century, as a means of improving the lives of people for whom all of us share responsibility.

Today marks an historic occasion for China, as through the Gateway, the dream of sharing knowledge and connecting with the world becomes a reality. And the benefits of knowledge sharing and development would be of service not only to the people of China but the world over.

Today, I express here my thanks to China for being a part of this.