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Excellencies,

I thought I would first, just briefly, get people thinking about something which has always been a part of my own education.

Think of the world before the printing press. Think of the fact that before the printing press, most people did not have access to the materials that would allow them to read. I can remember my own university education. I was introduced at the University of Toronto to a place called "the stacks" and the stacks were the places underneath the library where there were gazillions of books.

And as a high school student coming into university, somebody had said "have you been to the stacks yet?" And I said, "no, I don't even know what the stacks are." And they said, "you have to go to the stacks."

So, I went to the stacks, and it was like an underground world of books of every conceivable subject, in every language. My whole inner consciousness was changed by the awareness that what I had been learning was just the beginning of the journey I would be on for the rest of my life.

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When you think of the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, it transformed the world because suddenly people could read. When people could read, they said "well, wait a minute" and then the first book, of course, that was produced by Gutenberg was the Gutenberg Bible.

So suddenly people could read the Bible. When the priest would say "this is what the Bible says," they said "no, that's not exactly what it says."

Because for centuries, most people had not been part of the literate community. Literacy became an incredibly powerful revolutionary force in the life of the world. It democratized the world, and it transformed hierarchy into democracy over a period of hundreds of years.

We're now entering into "the stacks" – only it's the new stacks. And it's bewildering. It's scary. We don't know what it is. Most of us don't begin to understand it. I have no idea how they did that musical performance which we just saw. How the sounds and the movement were connected to create the light and to create the artistic images. It's extraordinary. I don't know how they did it, but they're doing it.

So, the first thing I would say to everybody is that the worst guide to the to creating policies that deal with something like this is fear. Because fear is a terrible friend in these circumstances. But people are afraid,

and people are worried, and people are concerned, as they have been with the introduction of every significant technology over time.

Most of us can't predict, and when people ask, "what is going to happen?" the answer to most questions that you will hear about AI is "I don't know, we don't know." We don't know because were dealing with the limits of human imagination. But we also know something exciting and that is that when we enter into this world, the possibilities are huge and the opportunities to advance are enormous, but also that there are significant challenges.

This technology comes upon us at a time when the world is a very troubled place and when we know that there are significant inequalities. So, there are processes underway at the UN. Some of them are endless. Some of them are complicated. It will take a long time.

There was no UN at the time of the Gutenberg printing press, which became ultimately what Marshall McLuhan described as "the Gutenberg galaxy." There were no people sitting in Parliament saying "no, no, no, no, we can't do it this way." Of course, if it had been possible for the powers that be, if the feudal order had been able to say, "stop the presses, literally stop them," it would have been an attempt to repress the technology that would have led to the liberation of literally billions of people from ignorance.

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So, this is such an exciting moment, but it's also a challenging moment. I think we need to understand that the holders of the technology are private citizens. They are companies. They are not governments. They are not states. They are not the public. The creation of this is something that lies beyond the public sector that is part of the UN.

But for all of that, we need to understand that we need to create a collaboration among companies, and between companies and nation-states, and between and among nation-states and international organizations, so that we can get a grip on how this technology can and cannot work.

Of course, the first thing I consulted before speaking to you today was my friend, Claude, who works somewhere in this machine of mine that I have. Claude told me that the potential for artificial intelligence is enormous and he also told me that there are many things we have no idea what the impacts will be, but we think they are on the whole going to be very positive.

Now I have no idea whether Claude is right or wrong, but what I do know is that the existence of Claude in my hand, in my pocket, gives me a power and access to information in ten seconds that I would never have had otherwise. Now what I do with it is a challenge. How I learn from it is a challenge. How we use it for the benefit of mankind and for the benefit of people and for the benefit of humanity is another question.

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But this is a debate which is ongoing. It's a conversation which is in place. When you say is there momentum – yes, there is. And the momentum is created by the demand for the product, the demand for the technology, the curiosity that is an innate feature of the human personality. And also, by the fact that it is now an enormous financial and economic machine, which is driven by companies that are going to have a significant impact and are having a significant impact. Based on what we saw in the swearing-in ceremony of the Congress earlier this week was the people that were there were all significant players in the world of artificial intelligence. They are the new economic giants of our time. There were no bankers in that group, by the way. It was all technologists – an interesting transformation that we need to look at.

So, we need to help countries build capacity. We need to make sure that the digital divide that already exists does not become deeper and wider. We have to make sure that all countries have access to benefit from this.

And of course, it's not going to be perfect. It's not going to be absolutely manageable. But one thing for certain we know – it's here. And as much as we would like to stop the world and get off, we can't. So, we have to learn what it is and take advantage of it and we have to create the processes inside the organization, inside the UN, inside all of our institutions that will help us to manage it.

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Good luck with the conversation. I look forward to listening and I promise not to interrupt.

Thank you.