Foreword

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In my 18 years at Cisco, I have seen first-hand how technology can transform industries and lives. As the role of hardware, software, and services becomes even more important for governments, businesses, and individuals, the high-speed broadband Internet Protocol (IP) networks that enable them have become integral to daily life. In fact, by 2020, there will be over 26 billion Internet-connected devices and over 4 billion global Internet users. Broadband Internet has been categorized as one of the world's most important general-purpose technologies, with the capability to dramatically impact social structures and entire economies.

Underpinning this development is data's role as the new currency. Every day, exabytes of new data are created and transported over IP networks. In 2016 the world has entered the "zettabyte era": global IP traffic will reach 1.1 zettabytes, or over 1 trillion gigabytes. By 2020 global IP traffic will reach 2.3 zettabytes. This data growth is fueling economies, sparking innovation, and unleashing waves of creativity. This year's *Global Information Technology Report* highlights the role of technology, and broadband in particular, in driving global innovation.

But no innovation can occur without the network. IP networks have the capacity to connect every person, every country, and every IP-enabled device. Global networks allow data to flow unimpeded, driving growth and enabling collaborative innovation in many areas, from production to processes. Those countries that are adept at fostering digital activity will continue to see new industries emerge, as well as experience the accelerated development of traditional sectors.

The global Internet must therefore be allowed to further develop without obstacles—this is essential in order for everyone to benefit. Increasingly, barriers to digital flows threaten to diminish the Internet's potential to drive positive social and economic impact. The open exchange of information is a hallmark of the growing knowledge economy. All stakeholders—including governments, businesses, the technical community, citizens, and consumers—play a role in building trust and confidence in global networks. Privacy and security should be integrated into technological design from the outset; strategies to protect and maintain the integrity of data must account for an array of diverse and emerging risks; and policy should enable innovation and global data flows while safeguarding against those who seek to cause damage.

Getting the balance right requires active, collaborative participation from everyone. At Cisco, we are committed to helping drive the next wave of global growth, productivity, and innovation.