STATEMENT BY MR. JANARDHANA POOJARY, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENT, ON AGENDA ITEM 49: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 19, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

The agenda item, "Information and Communication Technologies for Development" is of great importance for developing countries as they are keen to benefit from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in their efforts to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustained economic growth. We thank the Secretary-General for the report submitted under this agenda item. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

The sectoral composition of the GDP changes with economic development. The predominance of agriculture in the least developed economies is reduced by the increasing importance of manufacturing, and subsequently, services as they move up the ladder of development. This transition is now occurring globally and is reflected in the explosive growth of the services sector, especially in the fields of financial services, information and communication technology (ICT), insurance, education and health.

The last decade of the 20th century had witnessed Information Technology (IT) emerge as the most prominent technology to have a revolutionary affect on the lives of people across the world. The IT revolution presents a real and profound opportunity for countries around the world to increase the pace and scope of the benefits of development. It marks a significant shift in the relative importance of different resources or factors of production in the development process. This shift from material to knowledge base resources opens up vast opportunities for the developing countries to accelerate the pace of development. The potential seems to have been narrowly focussed on the development of the IT sector, but far greater potential lies in the extension and application of IT to stimulate the

development of other sectors of the domestic economy. Apart from generating new employment opportunities, the application of IT can vastly expand access to education, health care, markets, financial services, vocational skills, administrative services and other aspects of modern society, at far lower cost. It can dramatically reduce the cost of communication, improve access to technology and marketing capabilities for the rural poor, eliminate intermediary exploitation in the production and distribution chains, increase government accountability and stimulate democratic participation.

India's Green Revolution is an example of how the input of greater knowledge in the form of improved production technologies can rapidly increase the productivity of land resources. India's IT Revolution is an instance of how the importance of human capital has come to acquire a higher position than that of material plant and machinery. The contribution of IT software and services industry to the national economic output of India tripled from 1.2% in the year1997-1998 to 3.5% in 2003-04 and it is estimated to account for 4.1% of the national GDP in the year 2004-05. The year 2004 marked a turning point with growing acceptance of an IT based global delivery model. This is driving fundamental changes in the global IT services landscape. Indian software and services export is estimated at US $27.3 billion in 2004-05, an increase of 34% over the previous year. The growth of this sector as a whole has made a deep impact on the socio-economic dynamics of the country. The sector has grown to become the biggest employment generator in India with the number of jobs added almost doubling annually. It has also spawned a number of ancillary businesses linked to transportation, real estate etc..

Mr. Chairman,

We subscribe to the view that it is necessary to develop human resources through education, including secondary and tertiary education, in order to benefit from ICT. The social benefits of primary education are widely acknowledged and it is, therefore, a worldwide goal. Information technology can contribute to achieving this goal. Minimally invasive Education (MIE) is a new educational technology developed in India, aimed at achieving mass computer literacy at a cost that makes it available to all children. It employs efficient modern learning models like collaborative constructivism and a sense of interlocking innovations, both technological and pedagogical. MIE has been presented in India, Cambodia, Egypt and South Africa. Despite the difference in culture, the results and benefits of MIE have been virtually identical, and have been appreciated in the countries where it has been presented.

In today's technological world, secondary and tertiary education have grown in importance. Similarly, the role of vocational training centers or IT institutions that provide the specific skills demanded by the market is pivotal. It is the development of such skills and capabilities which attracts private investment, including foreign direct investment, and, in turn, contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction. With the development of modern media that brings sound and video images into every household, and with the advent of the Internet that enables us to reach out to sources of knowledge around the world, modern education offers both unprecedented richness of content and the capacity to deliver it. We should utilize the opportunity to close the education gap that separates the world's most prosperous communities from their poorer cousins.

Mr. Chairman,

At the Millennium Summit, our leaders collectively agreed to work together to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially ICT, are available to all. The Declaration of Principles agreed at the First Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society rightly states the imperative of working together to develop and widen ICT applications and to create an enabling environment at all levels so that these technologies can contribute significantly towards increasing productivity, promoting economic growth, generating employment and improving the quality of life for all. Bridging the digital divide – the uneven diffusion of ICT - between and within nations is now a global objective. Given the pace of revolutionary change in the field of ICT, the divide widens daily, demonstrating the imperative of concerted and urgent action by the international community. The national digital divide is being bridged, for example, through the 'Wireless In Local Loop Technology' developed by the Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, which eliminates expensive modems and copper lines and is already being used in Fiji, Yemen, Nigeria and Tunisia. Similarly, the hand held Internet appliance "simputer" is both cheap and can even be used by the illiterate. This has been developed by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and the intellectual property right transferred for free to a non-profit Simputer Trust which is licensing the technology at a nominal fee to developing countries. Regional computer centers have been set up in Mauritius and Ghana and projects to establish IT centers in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Laos and Myanmar, are nearing completion. Under its technical assistance programme, India is also extending technical assistance to several developing countries for developing IT infrastructure networking and e-governance systems.

India has started work on a connectivity mission in Africa. It will support tele-education, tele-medicine, e-commerce, e-governance, into-tainment, resource-mapping and meteorological services. The seamless and integrated satellite, fiber optics and wireless network, to be provided by India, will connect 5 universities, 51 learning centers, 10 super-specialty hospitals and 53 patient-end locations in rural areas spread all over Africa. Within the next three years all the African nations will be in a position to participate in this network and reap its benefits.

Mr. Chairman,

E-commerce is another area that has tremendous scope. It has broken geographical barriers and opens up opportunities for small and medium scale enterprises to extend their geographical reach and secure new customers in ways formerly restricted to much larger firms.

Information Security is assuming vital importance with the wide spread of IT application in commercial, strategic and other sectors in the country. India has developed guidelines for Banking and Financial sectors for implementation of information security management system. As we modernize, our economies, our financial systems, our rail and air traffic control systems get progressively integrated. A vast literature is already available on how information technology can be used to disrupt such progressively integrating systems. We are confident that the World Summit on the Information Society will examine the issue more comprehensively than at present.

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nations system has a crucial role to play in making ICT work for the promotion of the developmental efforts of developing countries. Development agencies could

do their part by allocating sufficient resources to support the deployment of ICT in the developing world. Industry could contribute by developing more efficient, user-friendly and affordable technologies and solutions, bringing ICT within reach of millions, and also joining various digital bridging and community involvement programs and actions. The UN system now needs to work on concrete programmes that provide technical and financial support for capacity building to developing countries. The ICT Task Force, we are confident, will contribute to this process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS