



STATEMENT BY MR. TARIQ ANWAR, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 46: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 23, 2008



Mr. Chair,

We welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussion on “Information and Communication Technologies for Development”. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chair,

We thank the Secretary-General for the report on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. We take this opportunity to reiterate our support to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and its enhanced mandate on follow-up process to the World Summit on Information Society.

We note with satisfaction estimates that by the end of this year, half the world’s population will have access to a mobile phone. This is truly remarkable, given the low fixed line telephone penetration in many developing countries, and the recent invention of the mobile phone. This also vividly demonstrates the potential for leapfrogging technology development by developing countries, without having to follow the same sequence of technology development of developed countries. It is satisfying that India is among one of the success cases of mobile telephone penetration. However, we note with concern that in the area of internet access, issues of quality and affordability are widening the digital divide. It clearly demonstrates that greater efforts are required, particularly by the international community, to bridge the digital divide.

Information and Communication Technologies are crucial to development efforts, not only because of their own growth potential, but also due to the positive influence on almost every field through their extension and application, thereby stimulating the development of other sectors of the domestic economy. There exist enormous benefits of using Information and Communication Technologies in, *inter alia*, reducing transaction costs, expanding access to remote and rural areas, improving marketing capabilities of rural poor, reducing intermediaries in delivery chains and enhancing government accountability and democratic participation. Thus, the Information Technology revolution presents a real and profound opportunity to fast-track development processes.

However, the necessary infrastructure and human resources remain a crucial constraint. Further, Information and Communication Technologies must be made affordable and user-friendly. We call upon the international community to extend technical and financial support, particularly through the United Nations, so that developing countries can fully bring Information and Communication Technologies within reach of millions.

Mr. Chair,

India has been playing a leading role in promoting and taking advantage of the Information Technology revolution. This is among the fastest growing sector of Indian industry, both for domestic production and exports. In particular, India has made significant progress in the software development and Information Technology Enabled Services area, leading to inclusive growth accompanied by employment generation. Business Process Outsourcing [BPO] has been a key element in this rapid growth, and has led to the acceptance of an Information Technology based global delivery model. Numerous sectors worldwide have derived benefit of Indian BPOs, including banking, financial services and insurance, telecommunications, manufacturing, retail sector, media, healthcare, transportation and utilities.

Though export driven, Indian Information Technology sector has led to significant benefits for the domestic economy. The phenomenal growth of this sector has had a perceptible multiplier effect on the Indian economy as a whole. In addition to the direct positive impact on income and employment, it has spawned the mushrooming of several ancillary industries, and has created a rising class of young consumers with high disposable incomes, triggered a rise in direct-tax collections and propelled an increase in consumer spending. The Information Technology sector now provides direct employment to nearly 2 million and indirect employment to 8 million more. It contributes around 5.5% to the national economy, up from 1.2% at the turn of the century. Interestingly, India's success in this sector has not been on cost alone, but also on quality, security, and other parameters.

Proactive government policies have been a key input in India's success. It is indeed a success of public and private partnership - a sector led by private initiative and enterprise, but supported by public policies of human resource promotion, enabling legislation, and other inputs. We have now also moved to the next level of BPO i.e. Knowledge Process Outsourcing [KPO], which is a higher step in value-addition. These processes include valuation research, investment research, patent filing, legal and insurance claims processing, online teaching, media content supply, etc.

Mr. Chair,

India is also actively utilizing Information and Communication Technologies for development. An ambitious US\$ 5 billion 5-year National e-Governance Plan has been formulated. The areas include road transport, land records, taxes, agriculture, treasuries, land registration, education, passport, postal service and identification documents. To make technology more accessible, greater focus is being given to software development in multiple Indian languages. We are also working on reducing cost of access. Further, Information Technology is also being combined with satellite based communication technology to create wide area networks, the objective is to reach rural areas through initiatives like tele-education and tele-medicine.

Before concluding, Mr. Chair, let me also highlight India's commitment to share its knowledge and experience in this field with fellow developing countries. A shining example of this is the pan-African e-network project to support tele-education, tele-medicine, e-governance, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services across the continent using fibre optics and a dedicated satellite. The project links major universities in different regions of Africa with major Indian universities and centers of excellence in India and major hospitals in Africa with super-specialty hospitals in India. India has also been assisting in IT capacity building in several partner countries in Asia and Africa.

Thank You, Mr. Chair.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)