Intervention by H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh at Second Committee
on agenda item 16: Information and Communications Technologies
CR-2, CB, 22 October 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1.   Let me start by aligning the statement of Bangladesh with the interventions made by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Benin on behalf of the Least Developed Countries.

2.   We have the report of the Secretary General on implementation and follow up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the regional and international levels. We thank the Secretariat for the report. It is indeed useful to have the information before us, as it helps us in discussing the issue with fact, and coming to a common understanding and decision about the way forward.

Mr. Chair,

3.   The Least Developed Countries are the most marginalized and most lagging behind in almost all areas of global importance, more so in the area of information and communication technology. For increasing the productive capacity of the LDC populations, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) set a time-bound target of "significantly increasing access to telecommunication services, and to strive to provide 100% access to internet" by people living in LDCs by 2020. It was also agreed that development partners would help set up technology schools or training centers in LDCs. However, we are still quite far from reaching that target. We believe the international community needs to focus more in the area of supporting LDCs in their effort to improving internet connections, broad-brand use and its wide-spread distribution to the people. ICT is not an end, but a critical component to enhance productivity and productive capacity.

Technology is mostly in the private sector in the developed countries and it is expensive for LDCS to procure. Therefore, it is imperative that the development partners should encourage their private sector through various taxation and incentive mechanism to invest in the LDCs.

4.   Although at the very first paragraph of the Secretary General's report, LDCs are mentioned in the context of the digital divide, however, we are surprised as we failed to find

any other reference of LDCs in this context in the entire report – no mention of the obstacles faced by LDCs in the area of ICT, no analysis or stock-taking of their performance, no recommendations about how to mainstream them in the global highway of information and communication technology. We expect these to be reflected in future reports of this kind.

Mr. Chair,

5.   Bangladesh, being an LDC, has made significant progress in the area of information and communications technology. The present government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been moving forward with its "Vision 2021" of making Bangladesh a middle income country within next eight years, and the main tool of this journey is what we call "Digital Bangladesh". Bangladesh, where still majority of the working population are engaged in the agriculture sector, ICT is being used to ensure effective distribution system where farmers receive all market information in the cell phones at zero or negligible cost, and fair marketing system where market prices are constantly monitored through various information technology means to ensure there is balance in the society where the farmers receive fair price for their produce, and the consumers also benefit from affordable products. People even in remote villages in Bangladesh now electronically access critical services like birth registration, mobile banking, life insurance, exam results, remittance receipts, tele-medicines at almost zero cost. Bangladesh has over 100 million cell phone subscribers and it has also set up nearly 4542 UISCs that provide nearly 400 different types of services all across the country in order to improve delivery of services, guarantee participation of people in governance, improve transparency and accountability and also to reduce corruption. This is, Mr. Chair, truly effective and efficient e-governance.

6.   In its latest report "Measuring the Information Society 2013" the International Telecommunication Union recognized the achievements of Bangladesh as one of the most dynamic countries that climbed four places in 2012 from 2011 in the context of ICT Development Index (IDI). The report pointed out that cell phone connections in Bangladesh are among the cheapest in the world. Important progress has been made with regard to international internet bandwidth. The proportion of internet users have also gone up significantly. Impressive progress has been made in the area of access of population to internet, particularly using mobile cellular internet.

Mr. Chair,

7.   Bangladesh has been striving to attain higher level of sustainable development for its people, and we are achieving success in different socio-economic indicators. However, resource constraints is impending our rapid progress. For example, setting up of broad-brand ICT connection, or for setting up of communication satellite---basically development of improved infrastructure that is essential for improved service is being impeded by resource constraints. Cooperation by international community will certainly help us in getting to our destination easier and faster. I believe with coordinated and coherent demand-driven

assistance by the Member States and international organizations, and with focused and country-owned national development strategies, LDCs, and particularly Bangladesh, can achieve sustainable development with ICT as a major tool.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.