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Statement by H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN, on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, at Second Committee on agenda item 17: ICT for development Conference Room 2, UNHQ, 28 October 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the floor.

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of 48 least developed countries. The Group of LDCs associates itself with the intervention made by the Chair of the Group of 77 & China.

2. We would also like to put on record our appreciation for the UN Secretary-General for the report on the agenda item on information and communication technologies for development. The report on implementation and follow-up of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is informative, and will help us in our deliberations.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action on WSIS flagged that least developed countries need special attention in their efforts to establish telecommunication infrastructure. In Tunis Agenda of 2005, the need of coordinated assistance for LDCs in the area of infrastructure for ICT was reiterated. It was highlighted that relevant parties, i.e., service providers should be encouraged to provide commercial internet service in LDCs at affordable cost, considering the constraints faced by these countries. The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for LDCs, adopted in 2011, set specific target of significantly increasing access to telecommunication services and to strive for providing everyone in the least developed countries access to the Internet by 2020.

4. Against these goals and targets set by the international community and the governments of the least developed countries, the hard reality is that only 5 per cent of households in the least developed countries have internet access. In terms of broadband internet access, with exception of very few LDCs, most of the LDC have very

little or basically insignificant broadband access in rural areas. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, there is strong probability that the digital divide, with rapid advent of newer technologies, will continue to grow, and the least developed countries will be further left behind.

5. The least developed countries have been giving their utmost efforts to fulfill their part of the commitments made in the IPoA in the area of ICT. Most of the LDCs have modern and relevant ICT policies commensurate with their national realities, yet progress is slow, and disappointing. Fact of the matter is, international cooperation is of utmost importance for ensuring that necessary infrastructure is set up in LDCs, and then appropriate technology is transferred to these countries for providing easy internet access to peoples at all levels of life.

6. On this point, the least developed countries call upon the international community, international organizations, private sector and other stakeholders to provide attention, and meaningful assistance to the efforts of the LDCs in building and strengthening ICT backbone in these countries. The concerns and constraints of least developed countries were not adequately reflected in the WSIS documents. We also fail to find sufficient information on ICT scenario in LDCs in the different reports brought out by UN. LDCs constitute almost 25 per cent of the Membership of United Nations, and it is important that for implementation of the concept of information society, LDCs must be included in the process. We request the Secretary-General to address this concern in his future reports.

7. Finally, Mr. Chair, LDCs are ready and willing to engage on the issue of ICT for development. The international community, including development partners need to fulfill their commitment of helping LDCs to eradicate poverty, to strengthen productive capacity, to build durable physical as well as ICT infrastructure. Information and communication technology will play the role of key tool and enabler in achieving these goals, and, with appropriate support of the Member States and other stakeholders including private sector, I have confidence that least developed countries will be able to achieve their goal of graduation.

Thank you.
