

**Statement to be delivered by H.E Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent
Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations on behalf of the Least
Developed Countries in the Second Committee on Agenda Item 16: Information
and Communications Technologies for Development
UNHQs, New York, 13 October 2016**

Thank you, Mr. Chair

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of LDCs. The Group aligns itself with the statement made by Thailand on behalf of the G77 and China.

ICTs have proven to be a catalyst for fostering economic growth, strengthening productivity and competition and widening knowledge base. It is a strong driving force for empowering billions of people with knowledge and information. It gives free access to terabytes of global research and analytical works, entertainments, healthcare, financial and commercial services, along with training and education on any issue that one can conceive of. A person can plug into the global information super highway from a remote place of a country.

The 2030 Agenda aptly recognizes that the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies. Target 9.c of the 2030 Agenda sets an ambitious benchmark to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020, which is just 3 years from now.

The spread of ICT is now faster than ever before. More and more people have access to internet, mobile phones and various IT related devices. Measuring the Information Society Report 2015 issued by ITU suggests that the proportion of people covered by mobile networks worldwide now exceeds 95 per cent. The number of internet users has increased by three folds in a decade. Peoples, institutions, businesses, researchers and governments are more connected than before.

The global average masks strong disparities in access between countries. Only 6.7% of households in LDCs have Internet access against 34.1 per cent in developing countries. 19 of the 20 countries with the lowest percentage of Internet users are LDCs. Even disparities prevail within countries especially between rural and urban areas. Moreover, Innovations in ICT that are now available have largely been designed to meet the needs of the developed world. Only market force cannot meet the needs of LDCs.

Low use of the Internet overlaps with sub-par services and high access costs. In many LDCs, very few of those who use the Internet have high-speed services. Access to fixed broadband subscriptions remained marginal in LDCs, averaging 0.43 per 100 people in 2014, compared to 28 in high-income countries.

A recent report by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) estimates that if current trends persist, the SDG target 9.c of affordable universal internet access in LDCs by 2020 will be missed by 22 years, due to the high cost of connectivity.

Furthermore, the World Development Report 2016 suggests that the effect of technology on global productivity, expansion of opportunity for the poor and the middle class, and the spread of accountable governance has so far been less than expected.

To harness the maximum benefits out of ICT, a number of auxiliary factors need to be put in place. Technology needs to be supported by appropriate know-how, institutions, public-private partnerships and a vibrant business climate.

With a view to realizing the SDG 9.c in LDCs, we would recommend the following five specific measures:

First: It is important for countries to adopt appropriate policies and strategies to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility to ICT services including broadband technologies. The policies need to be coupled with modern infrastructure and service delivery systems.

Second: The ICT services and facilities must be combined with the relevant skills, capabilities and opportunities. Appropriate training and education is vitally important to provide necessary ICT literacy and numeracy of the citizens to seize the opportunity that the modern ICT offers.

Third: LDCs need appropriate technologies and relevant know-how to adapt and commercialize them taking into account the local needs and circumstances. Operationalization of the Technology Bank for LDCs can foster the transfer of appropriate technologies and know-how to LDCs.

Fourth: LDCs also need adequate financial support to build their ICT networks, especially broadband networks. They also need adequate support to procure necessary instruments, hardware and software to get access to modern equipment and facilities.

Fifth: in the framework of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the partnership in the field of ICT should be fostered among the South. In this connection, we refer to the side event on "***South-South and Triangular Cooperation in scaling up Innovation in Public Service Delivery***" hosted by Bangladesh during the High Level Segment of the 71st UNGA that highlighted the prospects of south-south cooperation to utilize ICT in our development endeavours. There should be more concrete initiatives among the countries in the South to exchange their innovations, experiences, lessons learnt and best practices.

Finally: Development partners have made concrete commitment in the IPoA to continue providing places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, technology, business management and economics. This commitment is resonated in target 4.b of the 2030 Agenda. This needs to be implemented and followed-up.

I thank you all for your kind attention.