

**Speech delivered by H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Permanent
Representative of Bangladesh to the UN at the High-level event on “Digital
citizenship - crucial steps towards a universal and sustainable society”, 30 September
2019, 3:00-4:30 pm, Conference Room 6, UNHQs, New York**

Thank you, Moderator, ASG Madam Francesca .

Hon’ble Minister of Italy for Technological Innovation and Digitalization, Senora, Paola Pisano,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Experts and participants,

A very good afternoon to you all.

Bangladesh is happy to be a part of this event on a very pertinent topic such as “Digital Citizenship”.

The recent surges in modern technologies, including breakthroughs in Information and Communications Technologies, offer the prospects of solutions and opportunities for sustainable development that are better, cheaper, faster, scalable and easy to use. The development of our telecom networks has expanded internet connectivity and fuelled the growth of applications that have broken down barriers between people, and opened up the door for social development and economic progress. Perhaps there is no better instrument to fight against poverty than technology.

However, we are concerned that while developed countries and countries at the technological frontier grapple with the opportunities associated with frontier technologies, many developing countries are yet to reap the benefits of these technologies. This runs the risk of a new wave of digital divide between developed and developing countries.

Apart from the digital divide issue, all of us are acutely aware of the risks involved with ICTs. The increased connectivity also carries with it an increasing risk of cyber-attacks and other related crimes, which have become more sophisticated and pervasive. The impact may range from fraud and data theft, to disruption of control systems. The targets may well include our telecom networks, power grid, financial systems and other Critical Information Infrastructures (CII), which would be prized targets for attackers wanting to disrupt our economies and societies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh has embraced Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) for its economic and social development. It has helped us progress from a low income to a middle income country. 'Digital Bangladesh' is no longer a slogan of our Government, it is a development strategy that touched the hearts and lives of millions of people in Bangladesh. It has helped us to improve the lives of our citizens. ICT continues to be critical for the future, as we strive to become a Smart Nation.

We are focusing on what we believe are the critical foundations of a sustainable digital economy--digital inclusion, digital finance, digital information systems, and advanced data.

By the Access to Information or A2I, a landmark project to implement 'Digital Bangladesh', we have been striving to unfold the true potential within the Government to create remarkable innovations that can bring meaningful improvement in the lives of our citizens. You will learn more about this from our Senior Policy Adviser, Anir Cowdhury who is in our midst.

I would only say that undertaking several initiatives, the A2I has been fostering a hands-on, action-oriented approach to tackle the biggest challenges faced by our society and people in issues like employment, disability rights, and agriculture etc. These are in a way engaging and empowering the whole of Bangladesh society to co-create novel solutions to development challenges.

While ICT has brought many new opportunities in Bangladesh including massive financial inclusion of the marginalized people, it also opened up new vulnerabilities for us. Bangladesh was also targeted. In 2016, thieves siphoned US\$ 81million from the Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh, in a sophisticated cyber-heist. Our government networks are regularly probed and sometimes attacked. We have experienced phishing, intrusions, and malware. From time to time, our systems have been compromised. Websites have been defaced. We have also suffered concerted DDOS attacks that have sought to bring our systems down.

However, Bangladesh has made good progress in building up its cyber security capabilities. Our National Cyber Security Strategy has been formulated. A Digital Security Act has been ratified by the Parliament this year. We are in the process of founding an apex body called "National Cyber security Agency" with responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure Digital Bangladesh. We established the Government Cyber security Incident Response Team (CIRT) in 2017, which has just achieved its Full Operating Capability, after successfully carrying out its first exercise involving a number

of Critical Information Infrastructures (CII) in Bangladesh. Our CIRT is collaborating with other CIRTs across the world.

We are deepening our partnerships with key stakeholders – in industry, the professional associations, owners of Critical Information Infrastructure, and international counterparts to encourage good cyber security, and create a safer and more secure cyberspace. We are stepping up efforts to develop relevant expertise and nurture a future-ready workforce to meet emerging and underserved cyber security needs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Globally, we are confronted with many pressing problems in the cyber security field including in norms, rules, and principles of the responsible state behaviour, threats management, the balance between rights and responsibilities, and cyber capacity building. No Government can tackle these challenges alone. We, therefore, stress the need for the UN to continue its norm-setting role in cyber-space in an inclusive, open and transparent manner. We welcome the opportunities for developing countries to voice their concerns and priorities through the current works of the OEWG. We also value the works of the previous and the current GGEs. Going forward, the two parallel processes are expected to have more informed dialogues for creating convergences and reducing duplication of efforts. We hope the follow up work of the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation constituted by the Secretary General will look into some of these issues.

Distinguished Participants,

We are in the midst of an unprecedented surge of interest in machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. These tools, which allow computers to make data-derived predictions and automate decisions, must be utilized to address development challenges to implement the SDGs. However, we need to pay attention to important issues of personal privacy and data protection. Privacy depends on security. No obligation to provide privacy will be meaningful if the data to be protected are accessed or stolen by unauthorized third parties. So it is necessary that all data protection principles include an obligation to protect information and security.

Cyber security is an enabler for the technologies that will provide opportunities for social development and economic progress. This will be achieved through a secure cyberspace governed by values of social responsibility and building consensus.

As the internet is globally linked, and so are the cyber criminals who work across borders. We must work closer together to combat them and secure cyberspace for the promotion and protection of the rights of the digital citizens. We can do this effectively only if we

better coordinate with and support each other in common cyber security initiatives in the spirit of neighborliness, aimed at building a strong and cyber-secure Community.

I thank you.