



**Statement delivered by Bangladesh to the United Nations at the Plenary of the
Second Committee of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on
Agenda item 16, ICTs for Sustainable Development
(18 October 2019, CR-2, UNHQs)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, I would like to align with the statements delivered by the State of Palestine, as the Chair of the G77, and Malawi, as the Chair of LDCs.

I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his report on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

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.

Mr. Chairman,

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.

Mr. Chairman,

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 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.

A rapid e-Trade readiness Assessment by UNCTAD highlighted Bangladesh's improvements in telecommunications infrastructure, trade logistics, payment solutions, laws and regulations, skills development, and financing, that can accelerate e-commerce and spread the benefits throughout the economy.

The Government is committed to make all commercial activities digital, and all current business laws, regulations and policies compatible with the digital commerce revolution.

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.

Several other initiatives of the Government have been helping the people to tackle the biggest challenges faced by them in issues like employment, disability rights, and agriculture etc. These are in a way engaging and empowering the whole of Bangladesh society to address the 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. 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.

Mr Chairman,

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. The developing countries must be supported to develop the skill of their workforce in the changed scenario so that the advent of these new technologies does not affect their job market and lead to further inequality and exclusion. A strong global partnership can enhance the contribution of ICT to accelerate development.

Thank you.