**Press Release**

**“Bangladesh is a perfect example of how Science, Technology and Innovation can drive growth and development”- ICT Adviser Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed**

**New York, 25 May 2021:**

The ICT Adviser to the Prime Minister, Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed highlighted how Bangladesh harnessed the power of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) to achieve its transformative socio-economic development during the past decade at the UN. He was delivering a keynote speech at a thematic panel discussion titled “Leveraging the Power of Science, Technology, and Innovation to fight multidimensional vulnerabilities and achieve the sustainable development Goals”. The discussion was held as part of the ongoing Preparatory Committee Meeting of the 5th United Nations Conference on the LDCs.

Highlighting the success of the “Digital Bangladesh” vision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, “Bangladesh is a perfect example of how Science, Technology and Innovation can drive growth and development”. The policy stimulated a high GDP growth in the country, which exceeded not only India and Pakistan, but also China in recent years. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh’s economy showed upward trajectory. The per capita income has reached US$2227 overtaking India.

The ICT Adviser said that the implementation of the “Digital Bangladesh” has helped the country to quickly adapt to the new business and work environment imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, it could quickly switch to online governance, online education, and online work. The mobile tracing and tracking system helped controlling the infection rate. Bangladesh, therefore, features among the lowest infected countries in the world.

Tracing back to the ICT situation in Bangladesh twelve years ago, he said that the broadband connection was one of the most expensive during that time. As a result, the internet user was only0.3%. In contrast, Bangladesh today offers very cheap internet connections, which allowed more than 116 million people to get online. This is 70% of the entire population.

The success in this sector has come in the way of high investment by the Government as well as successful public-private partnership models. The Government of Bangladesh has directly invested seven billion US dollar in building IT infrastructure throughout the country. It has laid almost thirty thousand kilometers of fiber optic cable throughout the country on public-private partnership. Today, 90% of the geographical area is covered by the 4G connections. The 5G will be launched this year. The Bangabandhu Sattelite-1, Bangladesh’s first satellite will soon bring the remotest parts of the country and the islands under the coverage of the internet network.

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He shared information about many landmark initiatives of the Government, which are contributing to the lives and livelihoods of the people, especially those who are the furthest behind. These include union digital center, various incentives for entrepreneurship, electronic KYC system through national ID, mobile cash transfer, e-governance, e-filing, e-judiciary, tele and online health, emergency services though national hotline etc. The ICT Adviser said that the Government has placed the ICT education at the top of its agenda. In almost every school in Bangladesh, Sheikh Russel Digital lab has been established. More than two million citizens were given different kinds of ICT training. In turn, Bangladesh has seen rapid growth in startups, locally led STI initiatives, and cost-effective digital products and services.

All these good practices in STI helped Bangladesh to transform itself from a digitally backward country to a digitally advanced country in just a decade. Bangladesh offers to share experience and expertise of its digital journey with other developing and least developed countries.

The Secretary General of ITU was the other keynote speaker. The keynote speeches were followed by a rich panel discussion, which was participated by representatives of UN Agency, Civil Society and Academia. The representatives of Member States and UN Agencies participated in the interactive discussion.

Speaking at the meeting, Bangladesh Permanent Representative, Ambassador Rabab Fatima thanked the ICT Adviser for sharing Bangladesh’s transformative experience to ensure inclusive and affordable digital access and coverage. She commended his leadership to advance the ‘Digital Bangladesh’ vision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which was instrumental in expanding internet connectivity, leading to the growth of e-governance and e-businesses, and helping the country to be more inclusive and prosperous.

The week-long preparatory committee meeting of the LDC5 conference kicked off on 24 May 2021 in New York. The Permanent Representative of Bangladesh Ambassador Rabab Fatima and the Permanent Representative of Canada Ambassador Bob Ray are co-chairing the LDC5 PrepCom meeting, which will continue until 28th May 2021. The Conference will be held in DOHA Qatar in January, 2022, which is expected to come up with a bold and ambitious agenda for the LDC for next ten years.

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