

STATEMENT BY MR. S.Y. NAIK, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 51: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 05, 2007

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussion on "Information and Communication Technologies for Development". We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of G77.

Madam Chairperson,

This agenda item is of particular importance to developing countries in view of its immense potential in assisting and boosting development efforts. Apart from opportunities offered by the Information Technology and related areas as growing services sector which developing countries can take advantage of, Information and Communication Technologies also exercise a critical positive influence on almost every field through their extension and application, thereby stimulating the development of other sectors of the domestic economy. There exist enormous benefits of using Information and Communication Technologies in, *inter alia*, reducing transaction costs, expanding access to remote and rural areas, improving marketing capabilities of rural poor, reducing intermediaries in delivery chains and enhancing government accountability and democratic participation. Some areas that have direct linkage with benefits from deploying Information and Communication Technologies include education, health care, financial services, and administrative services.

As countries move up the development ladder, the contribution to the economic output of a country shifts from agriculture to manufacturing to services. Buoyed by the revolution in the Information and Communication Technology sector since the last decade of the 20th century, the global economy has seen a similar shift to the services sector. This presents a special opportunity for developing countries. By effectively utilizing their comparative advantage in labour and human capital, rather than relying on material resources, developing countries can hope to reap the benefits of this global phenomenon more equitably. In addition, this leads to generation of employment. Thus, the Information Technology revolution presents a real and profound opportunity to increase the pace and scope of the benefits of development.

However, the primary challenge is of developing appropriate human resources, which is crucial for taking advantage of Information and Communication Technologies. This can only be done through capacity building. We also need to focus on making these technologies affordable and user-friendly. Only then can we progress toward bridging the digital divide. We call upon the international community to extend technical and financial support, particularly through the United Nations, so that developing countries can fully bring Information and Communication Technologies within reach of millions. We support the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and its enhanced mandate on follow-up process to the World Summit on Information Society.

Madam Chairperson,

India's has been striving to take advantage of this Information Technology revolution. This sector, particularly the Information Technology Enabled Services sector, has seen astronomical growth rates and has generated growth accompanied by employment. The contribution of this sector to our national economic output is now over 5%, from merely 1.2% at the turn of the century. Business Process Outsourcing [BPO] has been a key element in the rapid growth of global services trade, and has led to the acceptance of an Information Technology based global delivery model. Numerous sectors worldwide have derived benefit of Indian BPOs, including banking, financial services and insurance, telecommunications, manufacturing, retail sector, media, healthcare, transportation and utilities. India has a significant share of the global Information Technology services sector. Export revenues are over US\$ 30 billion annually, and are on track to reach US\$ 60 billion by 2010.

The resultant employment generation from the Information Technology sector growth has made a positive impact on the socio-economic dynamics of the country. It has also spawned a number of ancillary businesses linked to transportation, real estate, etc. This sector is also a testimony to the success of the private sector and the State working together – a sector led by private initiative and enterprise, but supported by public policies of human resource promotion, enabling legislation, and other inputs.

India is committed to harness the benefit of deploying Information and Communications Technology in diverse areas. We have launched an ambitious programme to promote e-Governance at all levels. The areas include road transport, land records, taxes, agriculture, treasuries, land registration, education, passport, postal service and identification documents. We have also initiated a programme for taking the benefits of Information Technology to the most remote parts of the country. Combined with satellite based communication technology to create wide area networks, the objective is to reach rural areas through initiatives like tele-education and tele-medicine. In parallel, we are working to make Information and Communication Technologies affordable to the masses.

Madam Chairperson,

As part of South-South solidarity, India has been assisting in the setting up of a connectivity project in Africa to support tele-education, tele-medicine, e-governance, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services, for 53 countries across the continent using fibre optics and a dedicated satellite. India has also been assisting in projects relating to vocational training in several partner

countries in Asia and Africa for promoting Information Technology, setting up Information Technology training centres as well as offering scholarships for training in this area.

I would like to conclude, Madam Chairperson, by emphasizing the importance of Information and Communication Technologies to fast-track development processes, and call for concerted efforts by the United Nations system to assist developing countries in this regard.

Thank You.

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