

Statement by Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Member of Parliament & Member of the Indian Delegation, on Agenda Item 16: "Information and Communications Technologies for Development" at the Second Committee of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 22, 2013

Mr. Chairperson,

India associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of G-77.

Mr. Chairperson,

Information and Communication Technologies are critical enablers of development. They themselves present enormous growth potential and can contribute to economic growth and employment generation.



These technologies act as force-multipliers, thereby stimulating the development of diverse sectors of the economy.

Information and Communication Technologies are particularly important in reducing transaction costs, improving and expanding service delivery, promoting access to information and knowledge in remote and rural areas, reducing intermediaries in delivery chains and enhancing government accountability and democratic participation.

We see the rapid deployment and up-scaling of Information and Communications Technologies as a real and profound opportunity to fast-track development.

Mr. Chairperson,

The growth of Information and Communications Technologies over the past decade has exceeded all expectations.

A decade ago, the idea that a person living in a remote village in India, for example could actually follow this debate in real time would have seemed a distant dream.

This dream is indeed true today and in fact anyone can actually watch me making this statement live on his mobile device!

This is nothing short of revolutionary.

Today more than six billion people worldwide have access to mobile phones and over a third of the world's population uses the internet.

What's more, the share of smart phones with the ability to deliver more data and information is rapidly increasing and more and more people have access to broadband services.

Information and Communications Technologies can enable developing countries to enhance capacities and maximize limited resources in order to leapfrog traditional development patterns. By doing so, they can make meaningful and rapid headway for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

ICT also is a critical enabler of better and more responsive governance, improved service delivery, enhanced transparency and promotion of social and economic empowerment of all our people.

Unleashing and tapping the enormous developmental potential of internet and mobile telephony is a real opportunity. We must make full use of it.

Mr. Chairperson,

India today boasts of over 700 million mobile phones. We also have the largest number of internet users after the United States and China.

Many of our major socio-economic programmes are delivered on IP based networks, and government and private sector networks are intimately interconnected.

India has actively utilized Information and Communication Technologies for inclusive development.

Our ambitious National e-Governance Plan has brought the government closer to the people. It has promoted greater openness and transparency and in the process has empowered the common people.

Information Technology has been combined with satellite based communication technology to reach rural areas through initiatives like tele-education and tele-medicine.

The initiative of Government of India to provide Unique Identification to all Indian citizens has borne fruit. More than 520 million Indians are now enrolled — making this possibly the world's largest ID scheme. The first major target of 600 million is likely to be exceeded by mid-2014.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and democratic society, India is fully committed to the free growth of the internet.

We believe in the true spirit of the vision outlined in the Tunis Agenda, which reiterated the need for multilateral, transparent and democratic international management of the Internet with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

As the experience of our Government has demonstrated, we can significantly accelerate the process of development by applying ICTs in a well-coordinated manner.

India attaches great importance to the use of cyber space and ICTs as a major vehicle for achieving the goals of sustainable development.

We believe that the governance of cyber space which is based on the values of democracy, pluralism, inclusion, openness and transparency should also be similarly inclusive, democratic, participatory, multilateral and transparent in nature.

Operationalizing the Tunis mandate in this regard should not be viewed as an attempt by governments to 'take over' or to 'regulate' the internet.

If cyber space is a global commons, it cannot be managed only as private property. Its governance and architecture should reflect this fact as also respect for basic human rights including the inalienable human right of privacy.

Global internet governance can only be functional, effective and credible if all its stakeholders including those in developing countries, contribute to, and are consulted in, the process.

Enhanced cooperation on optimizing public policies on the use of cyberspace for development, therefore, should be a common goal for us in the United Nations.

The 10th anniversary of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), due in 2015, will be an opportunity for all of us to assess how cyber space and its related technologies can be optimally used for development.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is important that these issues are discussed openly.

India, I can assure you, remains committed to cooperate with all our partners in developing policies through the United Nations to support the use of cyber space and ICTs for sustainable and inclusive development.

I thank you.

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