

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-first session
Geneva, 14-18 May 2018**

**Item 2: Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the
outcomes World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and
international level**

Statement submitted by

India

Tuesday, 15 May 2018

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Statement by India on Agenda Item 2 at the 21st session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development delivered by Sh. Animesh Choudhury, Second Secretary, on 15th May 2018 at Palais de Nations, Geneva.

[Agenda Item 2: Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels.]

Mr. Chair,

First of all, India would also like to thank the Head of the CSTD Secretariat for her presentation on the Secretary General's Report.

Mr Chair,

2. India appreciates the detailed report of the Secretary General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels.

3. We agree with the assertion in the report that rapid changes in the technological world in recent years have occurred and continue to occur bringing in new complexities. The world in the last few years have witnessed the growth of revolutionary concepts like block-chain, big-data, internet of things in the realm of technology. These technologies and concepts need to be well understood and deliberated on amongst all stakeholders otherwise, unless well harnessed and directed, they have a tendency to shake the working of the ongoing institutional structures.

Mr. Chair,

4. India fully agrees with the report's emphasis on inequalities plaguing the ICT world. The problem of digital divide has always been there on our agenda since early 2000 when the world decided to come together to discuss the concerns of the information age. Digital divide itself has several manifestations; it can be between nations or regions or within nations and regions. It can also be within the demography like disparities in access and awareness amongst the youth, the elderly or in terms of gender.

5. India supports the formulation of public policies aimed at bridging the digital divide. We reaffirm support to the multi-stakeholder approach with each stakeholder performing their respective roles and responsibilities.

6. The Government of India has been taking several steps to bridge the digital divide by the launch of several programmes with special focus on women and the youth.

7. The excellent integration of space technology to enable the education sector has been a milestone in the country. The National Knowledge Network (NKN) is a state-of-the-art Pan-India network and is a revolutionary step towards creating a knowledge society without boundaries. Presently over 1500 institutes are connected.

8. The Digital India program launched in 2015, has its focus on three key vision areas- infrastructure as a utility to every citizen, governance and services on demand and digital empowerment of citizens.

Mr. Chair,

9. Technology can play a pivotal role in improving the way health services are delivered. India has launched a number of initiatives in the field of e-Health. Government of India has been working on creating telemedicine infrastructure all over the country.

Mr. Chair,

10. India is currently the world's second-largest telecommunications market with a subscriber base of 1.05 billion and has registered strong growth in the past decade and half.

11. One of the revolutionary initiatives in the last decade in the sphere of ICT enabled socio-economic development in the country has been Aadhaar, a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increase convenience and promote hassle-free people-centric governance. The tripod of 1 billion digital identities, 1 billion mobile user-base and over 250 million bank accounts is waiting to unleash a very big digital revolution in India

Mr. Chair,

12. We all are aware that the 2nd Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, of which India was a member, failed to reach any consensus on the way forward. This is an area of concern as the information age belongs to all and any lack of consensus will only multiply our challenges in the future. India has taken a supportive stance for multistakeholderism in Internet Governance. However, India maintains that governments have a primary role in cyber-security because of their duty to protect their citizens and national security interests.

Mr. Chair,

13. India appreciates the details provided in the report on the progress on the implementation of the WSIS action lines. The role of ICT remains instrumental as a catalyst to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, a lot needs to be done as the challenges plaguing the information world in 2000 have remained with us even after almost two decades with some new challenges being added over the years.

14. India looks forward to productive discussions in the current session in of CSTD. Before concluding, the delegation of India would like to emphasize that a secure and free internet should be the bed-rock of our discussions on ICT and only a democratic internet governance structure can ensure the same. We are confident that Commission's expertise will help identify the synergies between WSIS, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Thank You Mr. Chair