**Item 2c: Towards an Inclusive Digital Future**

Theme Questions for Agenda Item 2c:

Q. What are the emerging opportunities in the digital economy and how can countries use them to diversify and build resilience to crises? How can regional cooperation and strategies be used to develop digital capacities for building inclusive and sustainable digital economies and societies and to leverage opportunities created by market integration and digital connectivity?

**Bangladesh**

Country Statement

On 2C: Towards an inclusive digital future

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Excellencies

An unprecedented acceleration of digital innovation is seen worldwide in business, education, health, and supply chain, spurring productivity and driving growth in the new normal. In recognition of the long-term development challenges, in 2010, the Government of Bangladesh adopted its ‘Vision 2021’ with the concept of ‘Digital Bangladesh’ that was declared by the Hon’ble Prime Minister ‘Vision 2041’ has been adopted in line with ‘Vision 2021’, aiming to end absolute poverty, explore the opportunities of emerging technologies, harness the benefit of 4IR and become a developed nation by 2041.

Distinguished Delegates,

When the world is struggling to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, our timely and prudent interventions helped manage the macroeconomic stability, and we maintained a commendable GDP growth over this period.

To ensure connectivity to the grass-root level, 3800 unions have been connected with broad-band internet using 28,000 km fiber optic cables. 18,500 govt offices have been interlinked with a dedicated network. The use of the internet has increased significantly. The telephone user of the
country is 177 Million, tele density is 105%, internet connection is 134 Million, and internet density is 73%.

Bangladesh joined the SMW-4 consortium in 2005, and SMW 5 consortium in 2017 and got a total of 2900 Gbps through these connections. The government is all set to set up the 3rd sub-marine cable in Bangladesh. By joining the SMW 6 consortium in 2024, Bangladesh's submarine cable capacity will be enhanced by another 600 Gbps.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

In the digital skills sector, we have trained around 50,000 young professionals, government officials, and people under rural communities in digital and emerging technologies, language and business culture for targeted markets. Bangladesh has the 2nd largest freelancer community in the world with nearly 6,50,000 freelancers working in international outsourcing marketplaces.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

In the case of Digital Identification, we have taken various steps, for example: we introduced the Smart NID in 2016 with embedded integrated circuit storing all the data. Bangladesh is the first country in South Asia to issue e-passports for all eligible citizens. An electronic microprocessor chip is embedded in an e-passport having forty-one different security features. The government made registration of birth online mandatory in January last year to avail 18 citizen services.

**Distinguished participants**

We have earned significant growth in Digital Finance. With over 100 million MFS users and average daily transactions worth over BDT 2 billion, over the last few years, Bangladesh has significantly grown in the digital economy. With better access, inclusion, and a consistently developing web population, the prospect of e-Commerce has been splendidly growing for the last couple of years. e-commerce is largely aligned to the Mobile Financial Service (MFS) as its mode of payment, which complements each other and demonstrates an incredible guarantee to develop. The ecommerce market reached Tk 70 billion in 2021.

**Distinguished Participants**

Bangladesh has taken different steps to ensure Digital Government, for example: MyGov platform, the largest integrated platform for all public services has 1700 digitized services and over 3.5 Million registered users. To ensure accountability and transparency in public services, the e-Nothi system has been established in 11,400 govt offices with over 115,000 officials. The government has established over 8,000 Union Digital Centres in the lower tier of local government to provide digital service delivery at the citizen’s doorsteps. 352 services are being provided at these centers to over 780 million users. BD Portal houses all government information under one umbrella with 52,000 govt websites, over 10 million contents, information, and data of central and field administration.
Over half a million teachers were connected on Shikkhok Batayon and able to exchange the contents and learning resources. Online courses were introduced on the e-learning platform called ‘Muktopath’. We created digital content for the student of primary and secondary education, which was administered through TV channel.

**Excellencies**

Our government, academia, and private sector—especially the Technology companies and startups have played an integral role in our COVID crisis response. We used home-grown digital technologies to monitor, track, and contain the virus's spread, map hotspots, keep people informed, and deliver welfare measures and citizen services. Digital services like telemedicine, live updates, self-testing tools, helplines, AI-powered chat-bot, contract tracers, mobile apps, mobile financial services, digital commerce, digital content, and videos made the lives of the citizens easier during the pandemic.

The Government used Central Aid Management System (CAMS) to distribute government humanitarian assistance during the crisis. Under Ekshop, we formed a Logistic Coordination Working Group with participation of over 70 e-commerce and logistic companies with the objective of ensuring continued access to essential goods and services during the crisis. A central database was created of PPE, sanitizers, masks and other safety products suppliers across the country. During the pandemic, e-Nothi facilitated work from home, keeping government offices in regular operational mode. ICT Division created an online meeting platform, Boithok, to keep government activities moving in the event of a similar epidemic and to conduct meetings or discussions. We made digital content for primary, secondary, madrasa, and technical students and telecasted it on TV to ensure that education remained unaffected during the crisis. A vaccine management system called ‘Surokkha’ has been developed by ICT Division, which was instrumental in administering vaccine management during COVID.

**Fourth industrial revolution technologies**

A Key component of the government’s Vision 2041 is: Creating an Innovation Economy. To materialize the digital transformation in every sector of the country by using the innovation of Information and Communication Technology, the government (ICT Division) has initiated the ‘Smart Bangladesh’ initiative. The “ICT master Plan for Smart Bangladesh” is being formulated by consulting all the stakeholders and ministries. The critical elements of the Smart Bangladesh Approach are Smart Citizen, Smart Society, Smart Economy, and Smart Government.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**


**Excellencies**

Using digital technologies, Bangladesh tackled the pandemic with fewer deaths and contamination, and our economy regained its loss faster than most countries. Bangladesh was able to achieve
positive growth during the pandemic. Bangladesh was one of only two ASEAN and South Asian economies to register positive growth in 2020 despite a global recession.

We see regional cooperation as the most viable option for shared prosperity. A systematic approach can be taken to scale the digital economy in this region further to drive shared economic growth and sustainable development. Collaboration between the regional countries can widen access to healthcare and education and create better livelihood opportunities in agriculture, finance, trade, and tourism.

We are incredibly pleased to see our neighbor countries investing in their respective ICT sector and digital skills, similar to Bangladesh. We are looking forward to exchanging our knowledge and expertise so that together we can ensure a smooth digital transformation in this Asia Pacific. Bangladesh has learnt from the current pandemic that we must move altogether to survive and prosper.

Thank you all.