



Country Statement

By

Honorable Minister, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

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Session Topic:

Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

Madam Chair,
Respected Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualikum,

And a very good morning/afternoon to you all.

First of all let me convey my sincere appreciation and thanks to the Government of Thailand and UNESCAP for arranging this 80th session of UNESCAP and hosting us in this beautiful city Bangkok.

I feel deeply honored to have the opportunity to speak before the distinguished audience at the 80th Session of UNESCAP, on behalf of Bangladesh, a nation deeply committed to leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

It is a matter of great hope that amid various complex adversities including the catastrophic effects of the pandemic and geopolitical crisis, the rapid growth of the digital transformation has brought about substantial advancement in the Asia-Pacific area. While new technologies can contribute to the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is crucial to guarantee that all countries and population groups have access to technological breakthroughs.

Bangladesh articulated its plan to transform itself into a higher middle income country by 2031 and Developed Country by 2041. In addition, Bangladesh is committed to achieving the targets of SDGs within 2030. To achieve all these goals and targets, incorporation and introduction of digitization in every sector is a priority area of action and playing a leading role in the implementation of the government's digital and smart Bangladesh vision.

Distinguished Delegates,

In an era marked by unprecedented technological evolution, Bangladesh stands at the forefront of harnessing digital solutions to address the multifaceted challenges of our time. The Digital Bangladesh Vision, declared on December 12, 2008 by the Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, brought about significant improvements for the economic, educational and social inequality factors that determine the digital divide, including income, access to digitized services, and socioeconomic factors. The newly announced dream on December 12, 2022 – Smart Bangladesh – set next major step towards realizing our father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream of Sonar Bangla, a Golden Bangladesh by achieving the status of developed country by 2041.

Built on the 4 pillars of Smart Citizen, Smart Government, Smart Economy and Smart Society, it is about bridging the digital divide by innovating and scaling up sustainable digital solutions that all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic background, all businesses, regardless of their size, can benefit from.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh has demonstrated leveraging digital innovation in all areas of its national strategies and plans. In the realm of public services, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in digitization, revolutionizing governance and service delivery. National Portal of Bangladesh is the largest portal of the world which connects more than 52,200 government offices. As part of the digital transformation of public services, the Government has digitized 2281 offices with a view to reducing time and cost. Through initiatives such as the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, our government has prioritized the integration of technology into administrative processes, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for all citizens. As a result, we have witnessed significant improvements in areas such as e-governance, online service provision, and digital identity management.

Mentionable that, Bangladesh has demonstrated notable progress, utilizing its 100% Covid vaccination rate and in-house developed digital system Surokkha to facilitate mass vaccination. Similarly, the integration of technology into education has revolutionized learning methodologies, providing students with access to online resources, interactive platforms and distance learning opportunities. Initiatives like the Digital Learning for Development program, have empowered educators with digital tools and resources, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and skill development across the nation.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Government is executing the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan for the year 2022-2041 which has incorporated key areas for leveraging 21st century technologies to realize the vision of building a climate-resilient nation. With an aim to reduce the disaster risk, the country has been working for establishing National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) where disaster information management and communication wing would be the key. The disaster information management facility would be linked with the Asia and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management.

In the area of commerce and trade, Bangladesh has emerged as a dynamic hub of digital entrepreneurship and innovation. Our focus on building a robust digital infrastructure and investment in ICT parks is attracting global attention and investment opportunities. The government has been actively fostering the development of start-ups since 2015, resulting in approximately 2,500 start-ups in the country with an investment of around \$1 billion. We have made noteworthy progress for availing investors services through Single Window Platform One Stop Service (OSS) to ensure smooth and hassle-free services to the stakeholders for promoting both local and Foreign Direct Investment.

Distinguished Delegates,

Bangladesh Government launched a global campaign called 'Zero Digital Divide' in 2023. The creation of 9000 digital centers across the nation has guaranteed equitable access to e-services. Bangladesh has the honor of being the first country to establish an E-Quality Centre with the goal of ensuring a zero digital gap. Bangladesh launched South-South Network for Public service Innovation, jointly with UN Office for South-South Cooperation in 2017, with an aim to facilitate knowledge sharing, experiences and expertise.

Excellencies,

We all experience the same complexity and unpredictability as digital technology grows worldwide. I urge world leaders to work together to find solutions for our shared problems. Cyber security and data security are two important challenges to mankind that are linked to frontier and digital technologies. In order to overcome these alarming challenges, I propose significant international cooperation and solidarity in the form of coordinated resource mobilization, policy, and regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, we must find out ways to set ethical standards and best practices for the application of AI.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The progress of Bangladesh in digitization is not merely a testament to our technological ability but a reflection of our unwavering commitment to sustainable development and inclusive growth. As we navigate the challenges of the digital age, it is imperative that we remain steadfast in our efforts to harness technology and ensure that no one is left behind in the journey towards prosperity and well-being.

In conclusion, I call upon our esteemed partners and stakeholders to join hands with Bangladesh in leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. Together, let us harness the transformative power of technology to build a future that is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable for generations to come.

I hope the members of ESCAP will take pivotal role and take coordinated actions to harness the power of digital innovation to build a better world with a sustainable and resilient future.

Madam Chairman, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to participate with my thoughts at this outstanding event.

Thank you all for your kind attention.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.