

Statement of India
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Delivered by
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Agenda 2 (a): Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

Madam/Mr. Chair,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would also like to congratulate the Chair and the Vice-Chairs on their election. I would also take this opportunity to thank ESCAP and the Kingdom of Thailand for the excellent arrangements for this meeting.

Madam/Mr. Chair,

Digital innovation has immense potential to fast-track progress towards achievement of SDGs. Recognizing their transformative potential and synergies with socio-economic development, and creating ecosystems that promote responsible innovation, are vital for sustainable and resilient future.

India is actively employing digital innovations across sectors to drive sustainable development. This has enabled us to leapfrog several challenges by streamlining government

services, and empowering people with convenient and secure digital solutions.

Development and deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is playing a pivotal role in India's digital transformation.

DPI enables creation of digital solutions, based on core technology infrastructure or digital building blocks.

India's approach to DPI is based on the foundation of open-source, interoperable, and scalable technology, and a sound governance framework. A layered 'stack' of open-source Applications Programming Interfaces (APIs) is owned and maintained by different government agencies. The developers can build software using these APIs to deliver affordable and secure digital solutions for the market.

The foundational layer of the India Stack is the Aadhaar programme which is a biometrically secured digital system, that has provided identity verification to 1.3 billion people.

The eKYC, or electronic Know Your Customer, leverages Aadhaar to eliminate lengthy physical paperwork for verifying customer identities, giving them faster access to financial services.

The financial inclusion programme of the Government, known as Jan Dhan Yojna, is based on integrating digital ID with financial system. This has brought over 500 million people into the banking system. Over 55 per cent of account holders are women, and over 66 % of accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas.

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionized digital payments in India, further driving financial inclusion. This is a real-time payments system that leverages Aadhar as the base layer that enables users to link multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application. In the fiscal year 2023-24 alone, UPI processed an astounding 131 billion financial transactions, amounting to approximately USD 2.38 trillion.

Digital innovation in India has been instrumental in driving transformative changes beyond financial sector.

Innovative digital solutions such as Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWin) and Arogya Setu app revolutionized vaccine delivery and facilitated targeted response during the pandemic. Digital innovations are being used to streamline procedures and improve accessibility, affordability and inclusiveness of healthcare as part of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. Efforts are underway to

further integrate stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem for greater efficiency in delivery of patient centric services.

The Prime Minister's e-VIDYA initiative, integrates various digital and online educational resources. A wide range of courses are available on digital platforms free of charge, including specialized e-content for students with special needs.

Digital innovation is increasingly vital in disaster management. Digital technologies are being used to monitor river levels, rainfall data, and weather forecasts. 'Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) based Integrated Alert System' has been initiated for dissemination of geo-targeted early warnings to across India.

Madam/Mr. Chair

Under India's Presidency last year, G20 Digital Economy Ministers reached a consensus on how to effectively shape DPI as an accelerator of SDGs. This was ground-breaking, as for the first time a description of DPI has been adopted by a group of countries. Public benefit, trust and transparency are recognised as important aspects of DPI.

By design, India's DPI is built for it to be accessible for adoption, reuse, and replication by others. This bears

testament to India's readiness to share experiences and expertise from its digital transformation journey.

In conclusion, ESCAP's efforts in empowering Governments, businesses, and communities, to harness full potential of digital technologies for sustainable development, are commendable. India remain committed to extend full support to these endeavours.

Thank you, Chair.
