

Statement by Dr. Asad M. Khan, First Secretary, on Agenda Item 44: Information and Communication Technologies for Development and Agenda Item 92 (a &b): United Nations Institute for Training and Research and United Nations University in the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly (November 17, 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on Agenda item 44 dealing with Information and Communication Technologies for Development and Agenda item 92 on Training and Research.

Pakistan delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement made by the Representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In this globalized world driven by knowledge and technology, a country's chances to move on the faster development track and to break out of the spiral of poverty is dependent on its ability to access and utilize technology. The rapid advances in the field of information and communication technologies should, ideally, make such access easier than ever before. But in reality the dramatic advancement in technology has unfortunately accentuated the digital divide.

A critical challenge for us, therefore, is to make technology work for the poor by creating an enabling international environment that would permit the utilization of technology through its transfer to the developing countries for the purpose of spurring economic growth and development.

An efficient and cost effective way to realize this would be to employ ICT as a strategic tool to promote and achieve broader development objectives and to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the ongoing assistance and technical cooperation programmes within the UN system and beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nations is well placed to lead the world in placing science and technology in the service of development. By building partnerships with all relevant actors, United Nations can lead the way in promoting the development objectives of developing countries.

The establishment of United Nations ICT Task Force was a timely step in the right direction. It has provided a representative and efficient platform for contributing to the policy debate and for the formulation of strategies for the development and use of ICT.

Pakistan, as a member of the ICT Task Force, is striving hard to bring the benefits of the global digital revolution to the developing world and to use it for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We will continue with our efforts to keep development as the central focus of the Task Force activities.

The first phase of the World Summit on Information Society held in Geneva on 10-12 December 2003 defined a common vision of an inclusive and people centered Information Society, where every one was able to create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge. The Summit clearly recognized that information and communication technologies are a fundamental tool to foster social and economic development.

Pakistan actively participated in the Geneva Summit at the highest level. We will continue to lend our full support to the Summit and look forward to participating in the second phase of the

Summit scheduled to take place in Tunis on 16-18 November 2005. We hope that the Summit in Tunis would build upon the achievements made in Geneva during the first phase of the summit.

We also welcome the establishment of the Working Group on Internet Governance as an important implementation of the outcome of the first phase of the Summit. We are confident that the Working Group would provide useful inputs to the second phase of the World Summit on Information Society.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has adopted a holistic, progressive, participatory approach to the promotion of ICT. In this regard a National Commission for Science and Technology headed by the President of Pakistan has been established. We are also concentrating on the up gradation of infrastructure in research and development organizations and institutes, as well as on technology development, creating linkages between industry and academia and development of an extensive pool of human resources in key areas of science and technology.

This dynamic national ICT policy has resulted in the creation of an extensive pool of skilled IT workforce, besides establishing an efficient and cost-effective infrastructure that provides affordable and wide-spread connectivity.

We are also actively encouraging foreign investment in the telecommunication and software sectors. In this regard, a liberal investment regime that offers an attractive package of incentives to the foreign investors including 100% equity and unhindered repatriation of profits has been put in place.

Mr. Chairman,

We see the UN Institute for Training and Research as an important forum for a coordinated United Nations system-wide approach to research and training.

We commend the contributions being made by UNITAR in making the training and research needs of the UN member states particularly the developing countries and in helping them build capacity in important areas.

It is, however, disturbing to see that while the UNITAR continues to provide free training facilities to Member States, the UN is still not ready to provide the Institute with a rent-free space. We hope that during this session, the General Assembly would send a clear signal that the Institute be provided with office space by the United Nations on a rent and maintenance-free basis.

UNU is another important institution, which is making significant intellectual contributions to the UN system through its research activities.

We greatly appreciate the support being extended by the UNU to the scholars from the developing countries through its capacity and network development activities.

Pakistan would urge the UNU to further intensify its efforts in meeting the training and research needs of the developing countries with a view to building their capacities in areas of immediate concern to them.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.