Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva

Statement by Pakistan at the 7ᵗʰ Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-Commerce and Digitalization
06 May 2024

Agenda Item 3 Building digital readiness: From assessments to implementation

Thank you Chair,

Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD Mr. Pedro Moreno,
Director of the Division of Technology and Logistics Ms. Shamika Sirimanne,
Excellencies, and distinguished delegates,

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Cambodia on behalf of G-77 and China, and Bangladesh on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

Pakistan acknowledges the challenges outlined by UNCTAD in its insightful report in preparation for this meeting. Disparites in digital capabilities between the developed and developing countries not only exacerbate the existing digital divide but threaten to aggravate economic inequalities.

The theme of our discussion for this meeting, "Building Digital Readiness" is of critical importance in charting a pathway towards equitable and inclusive digital development for all.

Mr. Chair,

Developing countries face multifaceted hurdles ranging from inadequate ICT infrastructure and insufficient digital skills to complex regulatory environments and limited access to financing. These challenges hinder our full participation in the digital economy and limit our ability to leverage e-commerce for sustainable development.

To address these issues, Pakistan would like to highlight some key measures in leveraging digital technology for development:

First, bridging the digital divide requires provision of adequate financing for investment in the development of infrastructure and technical capabilities. It is essential that the international financial architecture is reformed in a manner that expands the fiscal space for Global South economies to invest in data literacy, analytical skills, technical expertise and digital infrastructure development. Strengthening digital literacy and provision of technical skills are crucial steps for empowering citizens to participate in the digital economy.

Second, global collaboration is needed not simply to build digital infrastructure but also for setting standards and regulations that take an empathetic view of developing country needs and capacities. The establishment of a robust, inclusive, development-oriented and balanced global data governance framework for cross-border data sharing is pivotal for bridging developmental gaps. To this end, my delegation supports an inclusive member state-led approach to developing interoperable standards in global data governance.

Third, protections against misuse in cross-border data flows and widespread availability of open-source online communities and softwares allow for learning by doing and building of local expertise. Knowledge-sharing is a critical process which needs broader support and recognition. This can be leveraged to foster innovation and promote entrepreneurship.

Finally, we support a broad expansion of technical assistance tools such as UNCTAD's eTrade for all initiative to facilitate synergies among member States and help governments identify sources of critical support. This must also be accompanied by an expansion of e-trade readiness assessments geared towards developing national e-commerce strategies.

Mr. Chair,

We believe that technology should not be allowed perpetuate inequalities. It should instead be deployed to reduce them, in support of social protection, health-care, learning and overall economic progress. Pakistan stands ready to collaborate with international partners to develop a balanced global digital framework to harness the potential of digital technology for inclusive sustainable growth.

I thank you.

*****