

**Statement by India at the 25th Session of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (15-19 February 2021) under Item 3(g) on ‘New and Emerging Digital Technologies’ delivered by Mr. Pawankumar Badhe, First Secretary on 17th February 2021 in Geneva.**

Thank You Mr. Chair,

India welcomes the draft report by the Advisory committee on the new and emerging digital technologies and human rights as mandated by the HRC in its resolution 41/11. India appreciates the hard work put in by the drafting group established by the Advisory Committee for this study.

2. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted positive opportunities for new technologies but also revealed some serious potential human rights implications. We believe that although technology itself is neutral, its design, deployment and access to its benefits are not.

3. New Emerging Technologies, especially in ICT, Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, consultancy, fin-tech, logistics, edutech, health-tech and biotech have enormous potential and will promote efficiencies and usher future growth and development. At the same time, these technologies have brought in issues such as widening the existing digital divide, issues of privacy, cyber security and most importantly raised several ethical questions. There also exists considerable information gap amongst various stakeholders on the importance, understanding and implications of new and emerging technologies which further complicates the issue.

4. In this regard, Mr Chair, Government of India has launched ‘ Digital India’ initiative with an vision to provide digital infrastructure to every citizen of the country, provide governance and services to every citizen and digital literacy and empowerment of its citizens. It aims to bridge the digital divide, specifically targetting the rural population including the marginalised sections of society like Below Poverty Line (BPL), women and differently-abled persons and minorities.

India has the highest mobile data consumption in the world with data being available at the lowest price.

One of the revolutionary initiatives in the last decade in the sphere of ICT enabled socio-economic development in the country has been Aadhar, a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets that increases convenience and promotes hassle-free people centric governance.

5. At the global level, India is a signatory of the Christchurch Call which brings together countries and technology companies to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online. India has also joined the recently launched Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).

Mr. Chair,

6. We believe that there is a need for greater international cooperation and better governance to address such issues. Addressing ethical questions, questions on privacy, scaling down costs, bridging the information gap and improving access and bringing in implementation modalities are of prime importance.

Thank You.

\*\*\*\*