

**Statement by India at the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Advisory Committee (16 to 20 August 2021) under Item 2 on**

**‘New and Emerging Digital Technologies’ delivered by**

**Mr. S. Senthil Kumar, First Secretary,**

**Permanent Mission of India [Geneva, 16 August 2021]**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

At the outset, India thanks the Advisory committee for its report submitted on the ‘new and emerging digital technologies and human rights’ as mandated by the HRC in its resolution 41/11. We appreciate the drafting group of the Committee, for this study.

2. The new and emerging technologies have already been playing a critical role in various aspect of our political, social and cultural lives. The transformative potential of the ICT and digital technologies is well known. The Generation Four technologies such as AI, data analytics, synthetic biology, genome editing, artificial materials, additive manufacturing, internet of things, etc., have the potential to transform our lives in ways unimaginable. The role that these technologies have played in combating Covid-19 is well known.

3. In India, digital technology have proved invaluable in pushing back the pandemic. They have enabled contact tracing, vaccine delivery, online and mobile-based diagnosis; and targeted delivery of welfare, including food rations for 800 million persons and cash transfers to 400 million persons. The surge in online education has also been noteworthy.

4. The Government of India has launched its ‘Digital India’ programme with the vision to ensure digital access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment, specifically targeting the rural population including the marginalised sections of society, women, persons with disabilities and minorities. We thank the drafting group for highlighting this in the report.

5. We believe that although technologies in themselves are instruments of change, their design, deployment and use would determine the role that they may play in shaping our lives including enjoyment of basic human rights.

6. We have all been aware of the dangers posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems, devoid of any human control and intervention. One of the critical concerns is that the terrorist groups may acquire and use new and emerging technologies. We have witnessed sophisticated use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) by terrorists around the world to broaden their appeal, spread virulent propaganda, incite hatred and violence, recruit and raise funds. We need to address this challenge more holistically, in particular, the human rights implications of terrorist exploitation of technological and digital innovation.

7. The attempts to disrupt social harmony by spreading misinformation through digital technology pose serious concern. These technologies can be exploited or misused to deprive the people of their human rights.

8. The Information Technology Act of India has provisions for removal of objectionable online content. The recently notified Intermediary Guidelines, 2021 require that intermediaries, which include social media platforms, observe due diligence while discharging their duty and inform users not to share information that is harmful, objectionable, and unlawful.

**Mr. Chair,**

9. We believe that there is a greater need for international cooperation, better governance and regulatory efforts to address the impact of new and emerging technologies on enjoyment of human rights by people.

Thank you.

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