

**Statement by Mr. Mohammad Ali Zarie Zare, on behalf of the G77 in the resumed organizational session of ECOSOC of 2001, on the ITC Task Force**

**March 13, 2001**

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force. We are happy to see that the present report have been prepared in response to the Ministerial Declaration of the substantive session of ECOSOC last year, which called for the creation of an information and communication technologies (ICT) Task Force. There is a wide consensus that information and communication technologies could contribute tremendously to the economic growth, social development as well as promotion of sustainable development. The ICT revolution, however, also poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further exacerbating of disparities and gap within and among countries. We should also be cognizant that the emerging new knowledge-based economy will remain concentrated in the developed countries and its huge potentials for advancing economic growth and development, especially in developing countries, still remains to be materialized. Therefore, concentrated and focused initiatives and actions are needed, at national, regional and global levels, to bridge the digital divide and the existing gaps and place the ICT at the service of development for all.

In this brief statement, let me just highlight a few areas of particular importance and priority to the developing countries.

Education - including basic and digital literacy -, capabilities, capacity to generate and utilize knowledge, access and connectivity, availability of diverse content and application, and regulatory and legal framework are major components for utilizing and materializing the huge potential benefits of information and communication technologies for development. Facilitating the transfer of information and communication technologies to developing countries and supporting capacity-building and development of local contents are other major steps that should be taken to ensure participation of these countries in the knowledge-based economy. Nonetheless, the ICT revolution should not be considered as a substitute for the efforts to ensure the development and modernization of basic sectors of economy but should complement and enhance these efforts. There is an urgent need to promote capacity-building in developing countries to enable them to participate in the global knowledge-based economy which could facilitate their economic and social development. The development of local content on the Internet and the ability of people to freely access it will foster a culturally diverse cyberspace and encourages entrance to the knowledge-based economy by firms and individuals in developing countries. Any initiative for development of norms and standards for the expansion and utilization of ICT should consider, in a balanced manner, the priorities and innovation of the ICT sector itself as well as the necessity of addressing important issues such as cultural diversity, information ethics, privacy, security and cyber crime.

As has been indicated clearly in the Ministerial Declaration market forces alone can not place ICT at the service of development, and there is a need for a genuine partnership and effective collaborative efforts involving governments, multilateral development institutions, bilateral donors, business sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to enhance the development impact of ICT. Such partnership should contribute towards transfer of technology to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms, especially the technology related to knowledge-based sectors, mobilization of resources from all sectors at the national and international levels and promoting capacity-building. I should emphasize here that in our view the United Nations has a major role to play in such a partnership and the promotion of ICT for development including through improving synergies and coherence of all efforts towards capacity-building in developing countries and integrating ICT in all aspects of development. It could also provide global

leadership in bridging the digital gap and prevention of its widening through a coordinated system-wide approach in the overall United Nations system.

Finally, Mr. President, the Group of 77 and China believes that the establishment of the ICT Task Force is a major step forward that could contribute towards the development of business models and regulatory models which are inclusive and responsive to the needs of developing countries. To this end, we support the overall objective of the Task Force, spearhead endeavors to integrate ICT in development plans, programs and projects and promote ICT development and ICT application in all sectors of the economy in developing countries. Moreover we deem it necessary to stress that the ICT should be considered as a global public good and financing of the ICT Task Force should be provided through new and additional resources and not through the diversion of resources from other development efforts. Provision of voluntary contributions to support the functioning of ICT Task Force and its secretariat in an expeditious manner is equally imperative.

Thank You , Mr. President.