Side-event: Promoting ICTs and E-commerce for Development in LLDCs

Statement by Mr. Jens Frølich Holte, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

The SDGs cannot be reached unless we make full use of the potential within digital technology. That is why my Government will present a white paper to Parliament soon, outlining how Norwegian development cooperation will integrate digitalization in all our support, multilaterally and bilaterally.

Norway is a strong supporter of the “Principles for Digital Cooperation” and we welcome closer cooperation. We need to avoid fragmentation.

Digital technology can contribute to overcome a number of development challenges. However, a number of challenges must also be addressed. One such challenge is the need to invest in basic infrastructure. Regulative frameworks must be in place, along with increased digital skills at all levels of society.

Norway is represented on the Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. We are particularly committed to support implementation of recommendation 1B on establishing an alliance and a platform for digital public goods.

The aim of this panel is to accelerate the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals in low- and middle-income countries.

This will be done through the discovery, development, use and investment in openly licensed technologies, data models, and content. What we call "digital public goods”.

Norway is committed to reducing the global digital divide. The report from the ITU on “The Economic impact of broadband in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS”[1] provides valuable insights and arguments in this regard.

E-commerce is among the many areas of digitalization where Norway engage. I would like to highlight that half of the members of the WTO have started trade negotiations on e-commerce. This is an important effort to update the multilateral trade regulations and make sure that these regulations will remain relevant for the modern digital economy.

We encourage more developing countries, to join the e-commerce negotiations in the WTO. This way you can contribute to the shaping of the future multilateral regulations on digital trade.

I am looking forward to discussing these important issues with you during today’s event.

Thank you.