

**Intervention by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Sherzod Asadov
at the Ministerial Video Conference
“Close the Digital Divides: the Digital Response to COVID-19”
(1 July 2020)**

*Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen!*

At the outset, let me express my gratitude to the organizers of this conference Estonia and Singapore on such a topical issue as the development of digital technologies during the pandemic.

1. Many changes in our lives has been brought by the coronavirus pandemic. The Government of Uzbekistan has been undertaken comprehensive measures to counter the spread of the COVID-19 in the country and regionwide. Significant efforts and resources are being channeled towards supporting the country’s healthcare system.

The impact of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) on our daily lives should not be underestimated. During the pandemic, the need to develop a freelance culture and improve IT skills among the population became even more important.

It should be noted that the Government of Uzbekistan pays significant attention to the development of the ICT sector. Over the past few years, Uzbekistan has invested heavily in its technology ecosystem, driving the creation and delivery of IT products and services, including Internet access, mobile communications, and other related areas. Ongoing development goals also include improving the investment climate by reducing state regulation and assuring property rights. 2020 has been declared as the Year of Science, Enlightenment, and Digital Economy Development in Uzbekistan. Today ICTs are significant factors that trigger economic development in the country.

In order to further develop information technologies, the Presidential decree “**On measures for widespread introduction of the digital economy and e-government**” adopted on April 28, 2020.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and the adoption of quarantine measures the government of Uzbekistan has taken a number of measures to actively implement digital technologies and innovative solutions:

Firstly, along with the announcement of the coronavirus quarantine in Uzbekistan, Internet service providers and mobile operators have provided free access to educational resources so that students can freely use video tutorials prepared by educational institutions with the instructions from the *Ministry of Public Education* and the *Ministry of Pre-School Education*.

Secondly, in order to ensure the speed of Internet communication at the appropriate level, the processes of changing the dynamics of Internet traffic, mobile and telephone traffic are taken. We have developed a plan of preventive measures for exceeding the volume of internet downloads.

Thirdly, Uzbekistan is actively working to provide Internet access to remote regions of Uzbekistan. The *Ministry for the development of information technologies and communications* has simplified the procedure for launching base stations by mobile operators.

Between 2020-2024, the government plans to incubate 14 IT parks across Uzbekistan, establish regional Digital Competency Training Centers (IT-centers), triple the number of residents of the technopark and increase the number of employees to 40,000 in this area. It is expected that this will increase the volume of computer services and programming, as well as their export.

2. In order to speed up the digital transformation as crucial factor for strengthening resilience of affected people we propose following domains of cooperation:

1) In order to facilitate the access to justice, ensure human rights and freedoms it is important to foster digitization of courts and pretrial investigation processes as well as to introduce ICT to the penitentiary systems. The active implementation of ICT and digital technologies in court proceedings is very important during the quarantine regime.

2) It is vital to ensure children's rights to education by introducing the digital technologies.

We believe it is necessary to consider the possibility of exchanging experience in implementing innovative methods of distance learning in schools and universities.

3) It is necessary to develop a single international human rights standards during pandemics. It would create common approaches to the concept and content of quarantine measures.

4) In the field of healthcare regulation, it is important to create an online healthcare projects that would involve the introduction of modern digital technologies, including a single electronic medical record, an electronic clinic etc.

5) To create a favorable environment to support start-up initiatives and developments in digital services, such as food delivery, medical and pharmaceutical services, services for entertainment and recreation, services for self-development.

In conclusion, I would like to thank once again the organizers of today's event, all participants and wish everyone sound health and every success in your endeavours.

Thank you for your attention