Distinguished Co-Facilitators, Excellencies, esteemed delegates, and fellow stakeholders

Sincere thanks to the co-facilitators, secretariat and for their efforts in shaping an open and forward-looking Elements Paper and to the IMSB for assisting in organising this session.

My name is Aditya Vikram Dube, and I serve as a Policy Analyst with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing—an R&D organisation based out of India in the field of ICT, Electronics and E-governance.

Two decades since the WSIS process began, the digital landscape has evolved profoundly. The Elements Paper recognises this by incorporating themes that were absent from earlier outcomes—most notably, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability, data governance, and capacity building. This broadening of scope is both necessary and timely, as these domains increasingly define the contours of the global information society.

Equally welcome is the Paper's focus on digital inclusion, affordable access, digital skilling, and MSME participation—areas that remain foundational to ensuring the digital economy delivers equitably for all.

The digital economy today acts as a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, and new forms of service delivery across sectors. Yet the benefits of this transformation remain uneven. Gaps in infrastructure, affordability, digital literacy, and institutional capacity risk excluding large segments of the population—particularly in under-connected low-resource settings and the global south. Without deliberate and inclusive strategies, these divides could deepen existing economic and social inequalities.

The Internet Resilience Index, developed by the Internet Society, offers a useful framework for assessing readiness for digital economic participation. Its four pillars—Infrastructure, Performance, Security, and Market Readiness—reflect

practical conditions that determine whether individuals, enterprises, and communities can meaningfully engage online. These indicators remind us that digital economy strategies must be grounded in the health and resilience of internet infrastructure itself.

We would also like to draw attention to the transformative potential of Digital Public Infrastructure—or DPI—as a globally relevant model for inclusive digital transformation and enablers of economic transformation. DPI architectures that are anchored in open-source technologies, open standards, and modular frameworks—have demonstrated how innovation can be both scalable and equitable. Flagship initiatives and solutions for diverse use cases such as digital identity, for real-time payments as also for trusted digital documentation exemplify how a foundational layer of public digital goods can empower citizens and enable last-mile service delivery. These are not just digital solutions, but socio-technical innovations that reflect a broader evolution in the architecture of the internet itself.

By offering open APIs and modular design, these platforms have lowered entry barriers for startups and MSMEs, enabling them to build atop public infrastructure without duplicative investments in identity or payment systems. Moreover, interoperable and device-agnostic DPIs allow even low-resource communities to participate meaningfully in the digital economy, provided such efforts are complemented by investments in device affordability and digital skills training**.**

As digital ecosystems expand, the importance of openness, affordability, interoperability, and inclusion cannot be overstated. These principles must guide both infrastructure design and governance frameworks. Closed systems, proprietary standards, and fragmented protocols undermine the universality and cohesion of the internet, and with it, the promise of equitable digital growth.

Affordability, in particular, remains a critical concern. In many parts of the world, the cost of internet access remains a barrier to full participation. Ensuring that access is not just available but affordable must remain central to the WSIS+20 agenda. This includes adopting and tracking global affordability benchmarks and integrating them into policy frameworks.

Finally, meaningful engagement in the digital economy also requires investments in human capital. National campaigns for digital awareness must be paired with device access and global initiatives on foundational digital skills training. Without such efforts, connectivity risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

In conclusion, the WSIS+20 Review is not only a moment of reflection—it is an opportunity to reframe the digital economy as a universal enabler of sustainable development. As this process moves forward, continued cooperation, knowledge sharing, and commitment to open, inclusive systems will be essential to building a digital future that leaves no one behind.

Thank you.