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### Press Release

## Bangladesh joins Int'l Alliance to reduce the cost of Internet access

Bangladesh has become the latest country to join the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) the world's broadest technology sector coalition dedicated to reducing the cost of internet access. On 24th July 2017, at Karabi Hall at the Prime Minister's Office in Dhaka, Access to Information (a2i) programme of the Prime Minister's Office, signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to signify the start of a three-year collaboration between the Alliance and the Government of Bangladesh. State Minister for Post and Telecommunications Begum Tarana Halim, MP was present as the chief guest at the MoU signing ceremony. Director General (Administration) of Prime Minister's Office and Project Director of a2i Programme Kabir Bin Anwar and Executive Director of A4AI, Sonia Jorge signed the agreement on behalf of their respective offices. Md Arfe Elahi, IT Manager, a2i, Prime Minister's Office moderated the session.

A4AI is a global coalition of 80 member's from the private, public and non-profit sectors, including: Development partners, UN Women, Google, GSMA, and the Internet Society committed to using policy and regulatory reform to lowering the cost of internet access. A4AI is working from 2013 with seven countries Myanmar, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala.

Bangladesh is the second country in Asia, after Myanmar, to join A4AI. Currently, around 40% of Bangladesh's population is active in online. As a new member country, Bangladesh will now work with A4AI and a wide range of stakeholders in the country to form a national coalition dedicated to identifying the key barriers to affordable access for all, and the policy and regulatory frameworks needed to overcome these challenges and contribute to the vision of a Digital Bangladesh, which will enable millions of Bangladeshis to afford to active in online.

Remarking on the signing, Executive Director of A4AI, Sonia Jorge said: "We are pleased to welcome Bangladesh to the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI). We look forward to working with the government and stakeholders of Bangladesh to advance the policy needed to unlock access to an open and affordable internet for all Bangladeshis. We are confident that this collaboration will achieve a brighter digital future for the country by contributing to the expansion of affordable and equitable access to the internet for all."

In Opening remarks, Policy Advisor of a2i, Mr. Anir Chowdhury said, "We're delighted to join the Alliance for Affordable Internet in our steadfast pursuit for affordable and reliable internet access for all citizens of Bangladesh. The vision of Digital Bangladesh by 2021 will allow citizens to have a one-stop access point that can scale innovative services. By working together we can achieve these goals and take public services to citizens' doorsteps and empower them further."

BTRC Chairman highlighted role of BTRC in facilitating internet penetration and access to internet in Bangladesh in this opening speech. He expressed BTRC's continuous support to such international coalition. Access to Information Programme & Alliance for Affordable Internet jointly organized the daylong workshop and MoU signing ceremony was attended by government officials, development partners, BASIS, CTO Forum Bangladesh, Bangladesh Computer Samittee, ISPAB, foreign delegates, a2i programme's officials and media representatives.

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