

Launch of the Aakash2 Tablet at United Nations

H.E. Mr. Ban ki-moon,
Secretary General of the United Nations,

Excellencies and
Colleagues from Permanent Missions and Observer Missions,

Dear Friends from the Media, and

Most importantly, the architect of Aakash2, Mr. Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO of Datawind, who flew all the way from India to Canada and then here for this event.

On behalf of the Permanent Mission of India first let me extend to all of you a very warm welcome.

We are gathered today for a special event that focuses on one of the principal goals of the UN, a better world for all.

Mr. Secretary General, you have kindly consented to unveil today an innovation that has the potential to fundamentally alter the development discourse.

It allows millions of young people the opportunity to benefit from technology and move towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals for themselves.

This innovation is unique, not just from the view point of the technology,

OR for being the world most cost competitive tablet, as it is widely billed as,

BUT more importantly in actualizing the idea of development innovation - and that's the reason why Government of India embarked upon the pursuit of this pioneering technology.

With pricing determined through an open international tender, Aakash2 is **the world's lowest cost tablet** at end-user pricing.

It harnesses top of the line technologies at costs, which the neediest can embrace.

And believe me, the technologies and applications that have been put in it, are indeed the world's best.

It also bridges the digital divide within our societies.

No doubt, Mr Suneet Tuli has been recently voted amongst the world's top 15 education innovators by Forbes magazine.

In India, the National Mission on Education through Information Communication Technology will equip 220 million students across the country with low cost tablets and internet access.

The Government of India is subsidizing 50% of the cost of this device.

With State governments and local institutions along with other development partners chipping, the devices would ultimately be, made available FREE to all students.

It may be pertinent to mention here Mr. Secretary General, that while outlining your 'generational imperatives and opportunities' in the beginning of this year, you had outlined that '*harnessing the full power of partnerships across the range of UN activities*' was a **key enabler**.

It is our considered submission, that by partnering with key initiatives such as these, the UN development system would be able to 'force multiply' to achieve the MDGs of universal education and global partnership.

The development of Akash2 also reflects India's continuing commitment to the principles of the United Nations Academic Impact, including those of educational opportunity for all and fostering global citizenship.

It is just two years since you launched the Academic Impact, Mr Secretary-General, and we are delighted to commemorate its second anniversary with this innovative product.

The first Aakash2 was unveiled in India, on 11 November by the Hon'ble President of India.

With devices such as Aakash2, **Technology Enabled Learning**, would be implemented to leverage the potential of ICT in providing high-quality, personalized, and interactive knowledge modules over the internet in a any-time, any-where mode, across all primary schools.

Using Aakash2, teachers & students in the remotest corners of our country can join a classroom and benefit from lectures delivered by the best teachers.

Mr Secretary-General, in a knowledge economy, the wealth of a nation will not be measured in terms of its natural resources but in terms of its human capital.

We need to promote research and innovation in national institutions and create an eco-system of excellence right from the elementary level upto the institutions of high-end research and innovation.

To us, Aakash2 is an epitome of such high end research, innovation and excellence.

It is said that the taste of a pudding lies in its eating. Very soon this device would be unveiled and then you can yourself decide, whether this 20\$ pudding, is worth its taste, for 220 million students who could have never ever afforded to see this pudding, lest alone taste it. (*20 \$ approx being the price at which GOI after 50% subsidy intends to give it to Indian students*)

Aakash, to those here who dont understand Hindi - **means SKY-** something that many aspire to reach out for.

It is our earnest hope that for students in India, and, indeed in time across the developing world, this device helps in getting them their 'mouthful of the skies'.

I would now like to invite His Excellency Secretary General, to unveil the Aakash2, and deliver his address.