STATEMENT BY MR. SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 84: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS © SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGYFOR DEVELOPMENT AT SECOND COMMITTEE OF 57TH UNGA ON OCTOBER 16, 2002

Mr. Chairman,

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77. We have also examined the report of the Secretary General on the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Science has, in the last century, opened the doors to many remarkable technologies that herald a new era in the fields of health, agriculture and communications. Science and technology will, perhaps, be the most potent of the many forces that will shape human history in the new millennium. Indeed, the key to economic growth in the future will be based on the access to and the ability to harness scientific and technological development.

3. We, in India, have recognized the importance of science and technology as a critical determinant of development and are seeking to ensure that we remain in the fast track to knowledge-led growth. The focus of our efforts has been directed at improving the quality of science and technology institutions and promoting education and training at all levels. Our investment in research & development has increased substantially over the last five decades. It has risen from US$ 2 million in the early 60s to US$ 2 billion in 1996. We are committed to enhancing expenditure on research and development to 2% of our GDP during the next five years.

4. However, our efforts, as indeed those of the other developing countries, are a minute fraction of our needs and requirements. It is the developed countries that have at their command financial resources that can be made available and utilized for scientific research. According to the Human Development Report 2000, the 29 OECD Countries spent US$520 billion on research and development in 1998, an amount more than the combined economic output of the world's 30 poorest countries. Moreover, OECD countries accounted for 91% of the 347,000 new patents issued in 1998. Clearly, this makes the developed countries technologically rich. We call on the developed countries to fulfill their commitments to transfer technology to developing countries on concessional terms, as stipulated in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action, to enable them to address development and environmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Developing countries are making efforts to build their technological capacities. It is imperative that the efforts of the developing countries at the national level be complemented by the

international rules of the game that take into account the needs of developing countries for access to a broad spectrum in crucial areas of social and economic sectors. With new innovations overtaking one another continuously, timely transfer and assimilation of know-how of these evolving technologies is of relevance to developing countries. Equally significant are the terms of access. Commitments have been made, as stated earlier, to make available technologies to developing countries on favourable terms. It is, however, a matter of concern that the cost of technology transfer to developing countries through the Intellectual Property regimes has risen sharply. We support the revision of the current Intellectual Property rights regimes to strike a more equitable balance between the need to reward innovation and the need to ensure widespread dissemination of knowledge and technology. In this context, we welcome the Doha Ministerial Declaration which acknowledged that TRIPS should not prevent countries from taking measures to protect public health and promote access to medicines for all. We hope that this flexible interpretation of TRIPS would be extended to other social areas where applications of science and technology are critical for human welfare.

6. We also believe that the international community must increasingly promote research in those technologies that have the potential of changing lives for the better while bearing in mind safety requirements and ethical values. Bio-technology in the agriculture offer opportunities for enhancing crop production, just as the `Green Revolution' had done in the Seventies. Information and Communication Technologies have immense potential for opening up new opportunities for growth and development. It is unfortunate that, despite many efforts, we have not yet reached a consensus on the ways to adequately harnessing the potential of ICT for assisting developing countries in their efforts to secure a better standard of living for their peoples. In the meantime, the digital divide keeps expanding incessantly. We look forward to the consideration of the impact of new bio-technologies on development next year at the 58th session of the UN General Assembly. My delegation hopes that the First World Bio-technology Forum to be held in Chile next year will contribute to the discussions in the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

7. India believes that the UN must play a leading role in harnessing science and technology for development. We welcome that decision taken by ECOSOC to hold annual meeting of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as against the earlier biennial meetings. The Commission should explore ways and means by which developing countries can enhance their capacities for absorbing and adapting new technologies. We are confident that the work of this Commission and the UN ICT Task force will contribute immensely to the World Summit on the Information Society. India looks forward to participating at the Summit and in its preparatory process.

8. The developing countries are making efforts to encourage institutions of the South to promote knowledge and

technology in developing countries. The first South-South High level Conference on Science and Technology which is being held in Dubai from 27 to 30 October will be a significant step in this direction.

Thank you, Mr.Chairman.