MEETING REPORT

A. Organization of the meeting

1. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Regional Cooperation towards Building an Information Society in Asia and the Pacific was organized by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) from 20 to 22 July 2009 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok. The Meeting was organized as follow up to the first session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) held in Bangkok in November 2008, and the 65th Commission session held in Bangkok in April 2009.

2. The meeting was attended by the experts from different Asia-Pacific countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Experts from three sub-regional organizations: Association for South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and representatives of international/regional organizations, such as, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Office for Asia and the Pacific, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also attended the meeting.

3. The meeting reviewed the progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in the region; discussed the necessity of streamlining the implementation of the Regional Action Plan towards building an Information Society in Asia and National Electronics and Computer Technology Center the Pacific and prepared recommendations for actions at the national; sub-regional and regional levels towards attaining the major outcomes, and goals and targets of the WSIS by 2015 in Asia and the Pacific.

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1This report has been issued without formal editing.
4. The meeting was declared open by Mr. Xuan Zengpei, Director, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD), ESCAP. In his opening statement, Mr. Xuan welcomed all participants to the meeting and emphasized on the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in setting a clear vision on how to harness the vast potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) to achieve the development aspirations of all the world’s inhabitants. He mentioned that the World Summit adopted the Plan of Action which incorporated 11 Action Lines, and 10 goals/ targets for ICT connectivity which were in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

5. Mr Xuan highlighted that the Asia Pacific Regional Conference on WSIS held in Tehran in 2005, adopted Regional Action Plan that aimed to assist developing countries in the region in implementing the WSIS outcomes. He noted that despite a recent significant progress by Asia Pacific developing countries in narrowing the digital gap, a new form of digital divide was emerging in term of the difference in quality and speed of Internet access, particular in the countries with special needs. Finally, he hoped that the meeting would review the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and made concrete recommendations for future actions by the countries in the region as well as the international, regional and sub-regional organizations towards building an information society in Asia and the Pacific.

6. Following the opening statement, election of the bureau to conduct the meeting was held. The following persons were unanimously elected as the members of the bureau: Mr. Lalith Weeratunga (Sri Lanka) as Chairperson; Mr. Sardjoeni Moedjiono (Indonesia) as Vice-Chairperson; and Mr. Shailendra K. Hajela (India) and Mr. Reshan Dewapura (Sri Lanka) as Rapporteurs.

7. The meeting adopted the following agenda:
   a) Opening of the meeting
   b) Election of the bureau
   c) Adoption of the agenda
   d) Objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting
   e) Review of the progress towards Information Society in Asia and the Pacific
   f) Roles/ experiences of international and regional organizations in implementing action plans including relevant action lines towards building information society in Asia and the Pacific, conclusions and recommendations
   g) Review of the status of action plan towards building an information society in and progress constraints, requirements, and conclusions and recommendations presented by each sub-region
   h) Sharing national experiences on national action plans and progress towards building information society, and conclusions and recommendations
   i) Workgroup Discussions:
      i. Streamlining the implementation of the Regional Action Plan, setting up of the regional/national follow-up mechanisms/structures directly responsible for implementation of WSIS outcomes in the region;
ii. Regional/sub-regional cooperation in achieving the targets as set out in section B of the Geneva Plan of Action of WSIS;

iii. Enabling policy and regulatory environment issues; and

iv. Accessibility, availability and affordability to broadband Internet, including issue of gender divide in access to Internet and ICTs.

j) Conclusions and adoption of recommendations for future actions/follow-up

8. Following the adoption of the agenda of the meeting, Mr. Ram Tiwaree, Information Technology Officer, Information and Communications Technology Division (IDD), ESCAP made a presentation on the objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting. Mr Tiwaree mentioned that access to information sharing and creation of knowledge contributed significantly to strengthening economic and social development, thus helping all countries to reach the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, considering that this process could be enhanced by removing barriers to universal, ubiquitous, equitable, quality and affordable access to information, and underlining the importance of removing barriers to bridging the digital divide, particularly those that hindered the full achievement of the economic and social development of countries and the welfare of the people in developing countries in the region.

9. Mr Tiwaree also pointed out that digital divide was changing in some respects and that while in general the divide might be sinking; a new form of the digital divide was emerging in terms of difference in quality and speed of access to ICTs in developing countries. Disparity continued between developed and developing countries in respect of the quality and variety of means to access and that in developed, high-income economies, the average cost of broadband connection was significantly less than in developing countries, both in nominal terms and as a percentage of the average monthly income. In many countries, there was inadequate coherence and complementarities between national ICT policies and national development and poverty reduction strategies and that, especially in the poorer rural areas, the potential of the Internet and ICTs in general for promoting development had not yet fully utilized. There was inadequacy of awareness of ICT benefits among government officials and stakeholders on wider penetration and usage of ICT in may developing countries of the region.

10. He concluded his presentation by briefly explaining the expected outcomes as a set of recommendations, ways and means for sub-regional/ regional cooperation towards accomplishing the outcomes of WSIS and implementation of regional action plan which would guide the ESCAP secretariat and other international/ regional/sub-regional organizations as well as the countries in the region for their necessary action to meet the current and emerging challenges of ICT for inclusive and sustainable development.

11. Mr. Shailendra K. Hajela, Consultant, ESCAP presented a paper entitled “Review of the progress towards information society in Asia and the Pacific”. In his presentation, starting with the background of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions in 2000 on the use of new technology, especially, ICTs in the national development process and achieving the MDGs, and holding of WSIS in two phases, he
dealt with the work done by ESCAP in organizing the Regional Preparatory Meeting at Tokyo, resulting in the “Tokyo Declaration”, preparing the Regional Roadmap towards Information Society in the Asia-Pacific Region, which served as input from the region to WSIS – Geneva (December 2003), where the vision, principles and certain thematic Action Lines, and goals with the objective to build an inclusive information society were adopted. He then mentioned other ESCAP activities, such as sub-regional meetings organized at Suva (Fiji) in 2004, Bali (Indonesia) in 2005, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) in 2004, and Kathmandu (Nepal) in 2005, based on which Regional Action Plan was formulated. The Asia-Pacific High-level Regional Conference held at Tehran (the Islamic Republic of Iran) in 2005 adopted the Regional Action Plan that served as the regional contribution to WSIS – Tunis (November 2005), where commitments to implement WSIS Action Plan and achieving the WSIS goals were made. Mr. Hajela elaborated the different dimensions of “Digital Divide”, viz., technology divide relating to access and network infrastructure, availability of content, and gender. Technological developments since WSIS Tunis had brought in another dimension to the digital divide, the broadband Internet. Mobile technology had to a large extent brought plain ordinary telephone service within the reach of large population, but broadband access poses a challenge for digital divide to appear in another form, which should be prevented.

12. He reviewed the WSIS Action Plan implementation and highlighted the ICT development attaining exponential growth consequent upon liberalization of the sector, establishment of regulatory and policy framework in all countries to create the enabling environment, resulting in massive private and foreign investment, rapid development and declining prices of ICT equipment, particularly that of mobile systems network infrastructure and Internet resulting in 4.1 billion mobile telephone subscribers at the end of 2008 with Asia leading with 42%, highest among all the regions of the World. India and China alone had added 154 million and 143 million mobile subscribers respectively in the last two years. He demonstrated the progress made on the Action Lines and the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan by statistical charts and tables. The ITU had combined certain features of Digital Access Index (DAI) and the ICT Opportunity Index and had developed the composite ICT Development Index (IDI). It represented the ICT Readiness (infrastructure and access), ICT intensity (level of use by the society), and ICT capability (skills to use ICTs) with 40% weightage assigned to the first two and 20% to the last. His review of the progress of WSIS goals (Section B) showed that some of the goals had already been met and all goals were expected to be met before or by 2015, provided that the priority assigned to the ICT sector in the national strategy and development process was maintained.

13. In highlighting the Regional and sub-regional cooperation activities, he elaborated the important activities undertaken by the ESCAP in organizing sub-regional and regional meetings related to WSIS and MDGs, expert group meetings, and establishment of institutions like Asia-Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT), Asia-Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), which were doing commendable work. He also mentioned the activities of ITU, APT, SAARC, and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). While elaborating the way forward, he dealt with the impact of economic downturn, which might cause reduction in further investments in the sector and recommended that the governments may consider fiscal incentives to obviate this problem.
Besides the investment issues, he said that there were: technological challenges relating to future of Internet (IPv4/IPv6), migration to NGN infrastructure; social and cultural challenges, such as consistency in provision of services (urban and rural alike to ensure inclusion), demographic variation in adoption of ICTs (training and local content aspects); possibility of abuse of digitization by super monopoly power – ownership of vast collections of knowledge, access to which could be denied or charged; impact on environment; and cyber crimes. His review and analysis of emerging challenges were considered by the Experts’ Working Group, in evolving recommendations.

14. Papers were presented by international/regional organizations, such as APT, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; sub-regional organizations, such as ASEAN, PIFS, SAARC; and countries, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. A summary of the presentations is given in Annex I.

15. Following the conclusion of the presentations, experts were divided into to groups under the chairmanship of rapporteurs. Each group discussed and indentified a number of issues and made recommendations for further discussions during the plenary session. The plenary session of the meeting prepared a set of conclusions and recommendations and unanimously adopted for action at national, sub-regional and regional levels on 22 July 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand. They are presented in section B.

16. The meeting was concluded following the concluding remarks by the Director of IDD, ESCAP and the Chairperson of the meeting.

**B. Conclusions and recommendations**

17. **Impact of economic down turn**

Recognizing that,
- There were less funds available in the market for investment and the cost of funds is also increasing, which may impede the desired growth of Network infrastructure (particularly, broadband and new generation networks also known as NGN) that might in turn result in a much wider digital divide in terms of access to broadband Internet in the long run giving rise to the new form of Digital divide;
- Governments were considering to reprioritize ICTs vis-à-vis the inclusive and sustainable development of other infrastructure sectors, viz. energy, transport, and environment issues, such as, carbon emissions, global warming, etc.;
- In general, public and private investments and priorities were changing;
- Mergers & acquisitions were on the increase;
- There was imminent need for strengthening the overall infrastructure to better meet the needs of balanced and inclusive ICT development;
- ICTs played a dual role as industry in their own right and means and tools for management of all other economic activities, thus rightly considered as engine of economic growth;
The broadband access prices in the developing countries of the Asia-Pacific region compared to Gross national income (GNI) per capita were higher than that in developed countries making them less affordable in the former, there was need for development of innovative and affordable packages and creation of awareness about the resulting socio-economic gains to promote demand, especially its usefulness and economic value for rural households where low incomes inhibit Broadband usage.

It was recommended that ESCAP should make efforts to achieve the following:

- Increased government support to ICT industries and adopt policies that promote investment and encourage other sectors to prioritize ICT usage in their activities.
- Promotion of local IT industry including the establishment of IT parks.
- Governments to consider providing more fiscal incentives, such as, concessional interest rates in lending, tax waiver for broadband Internet access in rural areas, waiver of spectrum charge for deployment in unserved and underserved areas.
- Governments to consider exempting personal income tax for household use, expenditure on purchase of computers so as to create incentive to enable general ICT usage, particularly, to make it easy for citizens who for traditional and social or other reasons remained homebound.
- Broadband Internet Service Providers to develop local content and application services whose benefits might be easily appreciated by the target groups of customers with the resulting demand making their operations commercially viable and sustainable in the long run, for example creating content that brings value (i.e. teaching material to substitute private tutoring).
- Awareness campaigns on the benefits of broadband to be undertaken, particularly in rural areas through private and government funding.
- In collaboration with regional/international organizations, facilitate the sharing of know-how on national broadband policies, standards for implementing broadband networks, and types of innovative and value-added content.
- In collaboration with UNESCO and other regional/international organizations to play a part in improving study/teaching materials.
- Government to intervene to ensure rural connectivity.
- Promote the use of the Universal Service Fund for implementing broadband including common infrastructure such as telecommunication towers.

18. **Technological issues**

Considering that,

- All countries were at different stages in planning and migration towards NGN infrastructure and services, e.g. China had planned to attain by 2020 solid foundation for the Information Society;
- Convergence issues, including those of regulatory bodies, were being deliberated upon;
- Some countries were evaluating whether to migrate or not to NGN, when the investment on existing TDM network infrastructure had still not been recovered;
The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) & The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) were working on migrating to IPv6 & international domain names (IDN) there was a need for IPv4 and IPv6 to coexist. (Indonesia had planned to introduce IPv6 by 2011);

Technology transfer was to be encouraged and was to be conducted in accordance with the international norms;

Several network technologies for providing rural connectivity were available from within and outside the region, such as WIMAX, iBurst, LTE, satellite technology etc., and each country may wish to choose as appropriate for its needs e.g., China mobile had planned to invest US$10 billion for covering rural areas by mobile broadband - 99.2% of rural administrative areas were already covered by fixed lines in 2007;

United Nations declared in May 2009 the adoption of Multilingualism.

It was recommended that that ESCAP should make efforts to achieve the following:

- To foster regional cooperation by way of exchange of information on technological developments within and outside the region and successful deployments to be established to assist member states in adoption of new technologies, particularly for rural connectivity.
- To assist member States in evolving strategy for migration to NGN and other technological issues, such as IPv6, UNL in collaboration with relevant regional/international organizations.
- To promote the implementation of NGNs through technical cooperation with International donors and funding organizations.
- Expansion of network infrastructure by both private and public sector to take into account current and future development of technology.
- Rural services providers to take into account the value and usefulness of providing content at affordable prices to the rural masses, for which innovative need-based specially tailored packages may be offered.
- Technology to be robust and user friendly so as to increase rural user.
- Standardized Universal Networking Language (UNL) to be adopted.
- Facilitate the collaboration among experts in order to make available, technology on multiple languages/local languages, including the development of tools for translation.
- Facilitate cooperation in collaboration with regional/international organizations in development of policies, increasing awareness and building capacity in Open Source Software.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing among countries on establishing one-stop e-government Portals, including payment gateways and identity management, establishing common national infrastructure, data standards, data centres, and unique service delivery points, as well as developing low power and affordable computing.
- Facilitate the sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned on sustainability of tele-centres/CeCs through forums, study trips, publications, and online social networks.

Considering the need for,
• Consistency of WSIS implementation and availability of services in urban and rural areas alike;
• And taking note of the possibility of future implementations and migrations to newer generation technologies and services might depend on market forces;

It was recommended that,

• ESCAP may wish to assist the member states to evolve appropriate public policies to require service providers to provide consistent and better technologies to all parts of each country. Regulatory incentives and safeguards would be required in order to ensure that the potential gaps in services do not become chasms in the ICT implementation.

19. **Social and cultural**

In accordance with WSIS Action Lines to maintain cultural diversity and ethical values, It was recommended that ESCAP and UNESCO may wish to take action as they deem appropriate to create awareness about potential impact of ICTs that might result in cultural homogenization, misuse /abuse of ICTs, erosion of local cultures, languages, etc. (PAN localization project was a good example). Technology and development should balance with social and cultural standards.

It was recommended that ESCAP should make efforts to achieve the following:

• At the national level, governments should be encouraged to intervene to preserve local cultures, languages, texts, and ethical values, among others.
• Monopolization of data and misuse of digitization by big corporations buying and controlling access to vast collections of knowledge should be safeguarded by appropriate national laws.

20. **Impact on environment**

Recognizing that,

• ICTs helped conserve the environment among others, by reducing the need to travel thus saving atmospheric pollution by fossil fuels;
• But on the other hand create e-waste and diesel generating sets supplying power to Mobile Base Transceiver stations in rural and other areas where no commercial power supply was available causing huge carbon emission;

It was recommended that ESCAP in cooperation with UNEP may wish to recommend to the member states to:

• Evolve suitable Energy Policy so that the availability of power in rural areas and ICTs may be synchronized.
• Encourage use of Alternate energy sources.
Encourage adoption of Mobile cellular technologies not based on macro cellular design suitable for urban areas but on micro cellular low power consuming systems working from alternate energy sources, such as solar for which technology exists within the region and internationally.

Focus on environmental issues such as Climate Change and Green ICT.

21. **Cyber crimes**

Noting that in some other regions (e.g. European Union) Cyber crimes Treaty among nations existed to cover such crimes that take place outside the national boundaries,

It was recommended that ESCAP may wish to take a leadership role:

- In drafting and in undertaking other preparatory actions for adoption of the cyber crime Treaty covering the member states on regional or sub-regional basis in order to provide safeguards against economic and other crimes that might take place from outside the national borders of each country. It may wish to consider available models (EU, UNCITRAL, etc.) for this purpose.
- In enhancing the role of the national CERT and expand the Asia-Pacific regional CERT to fight cyber crime.

22. **Streamlining the implementation of the Regional Action Plan towards the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific (RAP)**

Whereas,

- The RAP reflected the activities as agreed and prioritized at the sub-regional conferences held by ESCAP at Suva, Bishkek, Bali and Nepal, and the high-level regional conference in Teheran;
- The meeting endorsed the adoption of (IDI) as the indicator for benchmarking the relative progress of ICTs. However it was felt that relative ranking might not fully reflect the real ICT growth in each country;
- ESCAP, as member of the Partnership for monitoring ICTs participates in monitoring the progress with other members of the Partnership.

It was recommended that ESCAP:

- May wish to organize annually a regional meeting of member states to apprise them of their respective positions with regard to WSIS implementation.
- Strengthen sub regional institutions [e.g. SAARC] for cooperation on ICT related activities such as linking National plans to the WSIS Asia Pacific Regional Action Plan.

23. **Regional and sub-regional cooperation**

ESCAP may wish to:
Consider signing MOU’s with sub-regional associations (e.g. SAARC, ASEAN, ECO, PIFS, etc.), where they did not exist, and coordinate the activities to the extent possible with them as well as with members of the existing Inter-Agency Working Group on ICT.

Organize, in coordination with other regional and subregional organizations, more joint activities/actions to share best practices, exchange information, and seek better possible actions in the context of WSIS outcomes’ implementation.

Develop a strategy for mobilizing resources for Programme activities of its own and joint project/ programme activities with other regional and sub-regional organizations.

Organize activities for capacity building, being co-facilitator of the corresponding WSIS action Line; provide case studies of successful projects, seminars, workshops, and information on pilot projects in ICTs, particularly those relating to rural areas.

Assist countries to mainstream ICT in their development plans aimed at achieving Millennium Development Goals – regional/sub-regional organizations to coordinate their respective programmes to derive synergy from their operations.

Seek nominations from each member country for a lead institution as an ESCAP focal point for the WSIS, where necessary.

Continue holding Expert Group Meetings (EGM) on a bi-annual basis.

Provide a platform for virtual collaboration for the meeting to be engaged on a continuous basis.

Create specialized working groups to discuss and make recommendations on substantive issues for consideration by the meeting. (TORs and exact modalities on engaging working groups to be defined later).

24. **Enabling policy environment**

- Regulatory policy should promote innovation, infusion of new technologies and encourage ICT investment. ESCAP may wish to organize sub-regional workshops for strengthening the regulatory capacity of ICT regulators and mainstreaming of ICTs in development plans to attain MDGs.

25. **Accessibility, availability and affordability to broadband Internet, gender divide issues**

The meeting recognized that:

- By 2015, 50% of Asia & the Pacific inhabitants should be covered by telephone services (fixed, mobile) but the goal should be to provide broadband Internet access.
- Social norms were more prevalent in gender disparity and therefore, the focus should be more on changing these norms.
- Household PC availability and access to broadband should be increased.
- Distance education should be encouraged to bring rural schools into the mainstream – this could be useful in bridging the gender disparity as well.
- Satellite based disaster monitoring and management systems that were available must be maintained in good operational condition to ensure their availability during disasters.
“Asian Information Super highway” must be promoted by regional and sub regional organizations by coordinating sub regional initiatives (e.g. GMSISN, ECO’s TAEFOS, ASEAN, and SASEC).

Assistive technology for people with special needs should be promoted.

In collaboration with ITU, ESCAP should conduct studies and should make recommendations to countries on how to improve the affordability of international connectivity.

Provision of broadband services through mobile devices should be promoted.
ANNEX I

Summary of the Organization and Country Reports

APT

1. Mr. Stuart Davies, APT presented the role of Asia Pacific Tele-communication (APT) in implementing Action Plans. He began his presentation with the introduction of APT background. Serving as a focal organization for communication and information technology in the Asia and Pacific, APT had made a significant contribution to the growth of ICT sector especially the telecommunication sector in the Asia and Pacific region through its various programmes and activities, regular meetings, forum and workshops. He also briefed the meeting on the APT’s previous achievements in the areas of training programme, ICT Development programme for supporting pilot projects in rural areas, and human resources development programme for exchange of ICT researchers and engineers.

2. Mr. Davies also noted that APT programmes provided tangible benefits to developing countries. Typically, APT runs over 30 training courses a year and that APT had provided over 7,200 fellowships to developing countries to attend training courses. Other major programmes included the ICT Development Programme for supporting Pilot Projects in Rural Areas where seven new projects were started in 2008 and the HRD Programme for Exchange of ICT Researchers and Engineers that had 4 new projects which started in 2008.

ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

3. Mr. Jason Goldstein, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific presented the work of ITU towards the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). He summarized that WSIS 2005 identified ITU as the lead moderator/facilitator for WSIS Action lines C2, C5 and C6. As the Facilitator for these Action Lines, ITU continued to carry out several activities, including preparation of a roadmap and consistent coordination and collaboration with the relevant stakeholders.

4. ITU-D had implemented numerous relevant activities between 2008 and 2009 under Action Line C2. Two upcoming events ITU plans to host were the Sub-regional Telecommunication Ministerial Forum for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam in Viet Nam on 11-12 December, and Connect CIS in November in Minsk, Belarus. ITU also had several flagship initiatives and partnerships regarding C2, and both ITU-T and ITU-R remained active under this particular Action Line as well. ITU-D had strengthened confidence and security in the use of ICTs under Action Line C5 through several pertinent activities, such as GCA, COP, PAC CERT and IMPACT. The next event relating to this particular Action Line was the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Frameworks for Cyber-security and Critical Information Infrastructure Protection (CIIP) in India, 23-25 September, 2009.

5. Under Action Line C6, ITU-D had remained very active by participating in many country specific actions while also hosting numerous WSIS cluster events, seminars, symposiums (next Global Symposium for Regulators would take place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 29
September to October 1 2009), meetings and events (next meeting would be the ACMA/ITU International Training Programme, held in Melbourne, Australia from 30 November to 4 December, and the ITU Forum on Human Capacity Development in Asia-Pacific Region in Brunei 14-17 December 2009). ITU-D also had 16 courses scheduled in 2009 under its Pacific Centre of Excellence (CoE), while also leading on ICTDec and G-Rex. ITU had developed a Roadmap entailing short-term, mid-term to long-term activities in which the objectives and established targets could be measured for C2, C5 and C6. Numerous national and regional challenges had consistently been encountered and ITU had made several recommendations to address them, including forming partnerships and contributing to UNGIS stockpiling database while also participating in the Open Consultations on the Financial Mechanisms, scheduled to be held in Geneva, October 2009.

**UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok**

6. In his presentation on UNESCO’s ICT in Education Programme, Mr. Benjamin L. Vergel de Dios, summarized that Capacity Building is the heart of UNESCO Bangkok’s ICT in Education Programme. The key to mainstreaming ICT in Education was to build the capacities of Ministries of Education in the Asia-Pacific region, which included the policymakers, the educational planners, school administrators and teachers. At present, there were two important areas in this programme: i) development of ICT in Education policies and plans and ii) teachers’ education and training. UNESCO Bangkok was currently assisting the governments of Bangladesh and Cambodia to develop their respective ICT in Education Master Plans. UNESCO Bangkok, which was also the Regional Bureau for Education in the Asia-Pacific region, was assisting a network of nearly 50 teachers’ education institutions from 15 countries to build their institutional capacity to prepare the next generation of teachers who were not afraid to use ICT. To promote greater awareness on ICT in education, UNESCO Bangkok was using ICT itself through the use of CD-based video presentations and e-learning modules to reach more people. Further information on UNESCO Bangkok ICT in Education Programme could be obtained from www.unescobkk.org/education/ict

**ASEAN**

7. Mr. Nguyen Ky Anh, Senior Officer, Infrastructure Division made a presentation on ASEAN ICT Cooperation Relevance with WSIS Plan of Action. He informed that ICT cooperation was one of the most important fields of cooperation among ASEAN members and ASEAN countries themselves had been actively promoting ASEAN-wide projects endorsed by the e-ASEAN Task Force and programmes under Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) to tackle the digital divide. He specifically mentioned on ASEAN activities towards the implementation of WSIS Plan of Action in aspects of information and communication infrastructure, access to information and knowledge, capacity building, building confidence and security in the use of ICT, ICT Applications, cultural diversity and identify, linguistic diversity and local content, and media. To put ways forwards for success, he proposed the following recommendations; (i) undertake and facilitate the implementation of key/meaningful ICT actions to have significant/visible benefit for the people and businesses in ASEAN region; (ii) identify cross cutting issues, and provide technical advice, to support ICT applications in other sectors; (iii) encourage cooperation
with dialogue partners, international organizations, private sector and other stakeholders for shared visions and goals.

8. In conclusion, he proposed the following possible areas of ICT cooperation; (i) information infrastructure; (ii) digital content and Content Industry; (iii) online transactions (e-commerce) and e-services; and (iv) investment and trade. He further presented with the following list of recommendations on strategies for implementation:
   - Map out the key roles of ICT for interagency cooperation
   - Develop the clear task orders/deliverables for each 2/3 year block until 2015 (and beyond)
   - Streamline the working mechanism and coordination process
   - Identify the roles of stakeholders
   - Communication Plan to mobilize resources

PIFS

9. Mr. John Budden, Advisor, PIFS made a presentation entitled “A Pacific View on Regional Cooperation Supporting an Information Society. A focus was made on progress made by the Pacific Island countries towards the MDGs achievement and progress towards access to ICT services and applications. He highlighted while substantial progress in sector reform and expanded connectivity have been made in the last five years, there has been less success in developing content and applications to satisfy the socio economic needs of the region. A number of new technology applications such as e-commerce, mobile banking, e-government, e-education, e-health and disaster reduction were still out of reach for the vast majority of people.

10. He also proposed a number of recommendations, some of which were to continue with sector reform and connectivity, create and exploit public and private regional synergies to reduce costs and improve efficiencies, protect Pacific vulnerabilities in trade in ICTs and intellectual property, etc.

SAARC

11. Mr. Swoyambhu Man Amatya, an expert of SAARC made presentation on the status of information society in SAARC. He summarized that information and communications Technologies were vital to the development of all other sectors, almost all member states of SAARC sub-region had placed ICTs as one of their priority sector. The priority included in general, designating the Ministry of Communications and Information as the leading Government entity responsible for developing ICTs. Regulatory Authorities had been established to enable competitive environment in all member states of SAARC. Among the member states of SAARC sub-region, India, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka were ahead to enhance level of ICT literacy and ICT skills in education and training. Almost all member states of the sub-region had developed security applications so as to check the crimes and build customer confidence
12. Akshaya and Anuman were some of the e-applications projects while Dharohar and “Mantra” were heritage computing projects in India. Similarly, community radio was increasingly becoming successful model for information dissemination in difficult terrain and a dispersed and isolated population. Bangladesh was moving one step ahead in making digital Bangladesh. Pakistan was launching health and education programme and Young Asia TV of Sri-Lanka throws some of success stories of ICT policy and application of SAARC sub-region especially in education, public service and R&D. Quality of Service was one of the important issues related to ICT development. The speed and cost of access to ICTs in the sub-region varied significantly. The cost of access to ICTs in mobile cellular was high in Afghanistan followed by Maldives and Sri-Lanka whereas India offered the lowest price for 256 kbps broadband Internet for both residential and business connections. Next Generation Network (NGN) deployment in the member States of SAARC Sub-region was still in its infancy and the transition to NGN access depends on the number of variables including success of alternate access technologies (Cable TV, Power Line Communication and WiMax) and market success of triple play services (video, IP voice and data).

13. Digital divides existed within and between the member states of the sub-region because people’s access to ICTs in the Sub-region varied significantly. The constraints and problems in the sub-region varied according to their development stage. In general, capacity to develop policies to effectively integrate ICT in the education system; lack of leadership to implement what had been planned and agreed; and lack of effective coordination among the different agencies supposed to implement the national ICTs were some of the major problems of the sub-region.

14. Mr Amatya recommended that WSIS Regional Action Plan (RAP) focal office should be established/designated to follow up the progress made on the RAP on yearly basis in all the member states of the SAARC sub-region. SAARC Secretariat at Kathmandu should act as a repository body of the WSIS. The SAARC Documentation Centre (SDC) located in India and SAARC Information Centre (SIC) in Nepal should be strengthened for efficient monitoring of the WSIS activities as per the time frame.

Bangladesh

15. Mr. SASM Taifur, ICT Advisor, Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre, shared some situations of building information society in Bangladesh, as well as progress, constraints and possible recommendations against the target/goal of WSIS. He summarized that there had been some significant development in the ICT sector during the last four years since the WSIS. In the pursuit of Vision 2011 of a Digital Bangladesh, the new National ICT Policy was proposed and submitted to Ministry of Science and Information & Communications Technology, Government of Bangladesh in 2008. The Policy incorporated new policy directions, taking into account new ICT initiatives, some of which referred to develop a reliable, secure broadband infrastructure throughout the nation for every Bangladeshi accessible from homes, workplaces schools by using new generation technologies (Wimax, 3G Network), e-government information and services at national and regional level, a legal framework that assures freedom of expression, democracy, transparency, and access to knowledge and culture.
16. In view of national achievements of MDG targets, he noted that Bangladesh had achieved noteworthy success in achieving its MDG targets, for example, the poverty reduction gap ratio has been decreased to 9% with a poverty reduction rate of 1.23%. Mr. Taifur also detailed on Bangladesh’s progress towards WSIS implementation in action line 1 to 11, and defined that some major constraints against building an information society included (i) inadequate access to ICT, (ii) lack of adequate training programs on e-Government and computer related projects, (iii) lack of reliable staff to work on IT system maintenance, (iv) inadequate local content, (v) low level of public awareness on ICTs, (vi) lack of necessary regulatory/ legal framework, (vii) limited supply of electricity across the nation, (viii) lack of information systems for delivering on effective public services.

17. To strengthen the development an information society in Bangladesh, Mr. Taifur suggested that the following list of recommendations be necessary; (i) establish e-Government Secretariat, (ii) enact cyber laws, (iii) set up standards and policies for e-Government strategies, (iv) create one stop government portal, (v) prioritize services of the Government and deliver them through common delivery channel, (vi) improve ICT access to online e-Government services, (vii) emphasize Bangla interface for citizen services because a vast majority of the population is still not comfortable with English, (viii) develop partnership with NGOs and the private sector to establish Internet kiosks around the country, (ix) appoint a mid to high level government officials as a Chief Information Officer in each particular office of e-Government projects to be responsible for providing training courses, (x) the government and NGOs should coordinate to increase awareness regarding to the use of e-services, (xi) improve an efficiency of back offices such as staff management, budget and finance management of the agencies, (xii) strengthen payment gateway system and facilities.

Cambodia

18. Mr. Chun Vat, Deputy Secretary General, National ICT Development Authority (NIDA) briefed on the current information technology and communication (ICT) development status in Cambodia, in aspects of the telecom services, e-government, and human development. Compared with the total population (14 million people). He noted that there were, currently, approximately 42,000 subscribers, and 4,242,000 subscribers in fixed and mobile phones, respectively. The country also registered a double increase in Internet subscribers from 20,402 to 40,000 subscribers in February 2009.

19. Regarding e-government initiatives in Cambodia, the government successfully launched in early 2002 the first phase of e-government project named “the Government Administration Information System (GAIS)” connecting 27 ministries and other governmental institutions into a single network. The second phase, named “the provincial administrative information system” (PAIS) was later launched in 2007 to focus on building access network, necessary applications and data centers in all provincial towns.

20. He also addressed that Cambodia was facing with the following challenges; (i) basic infrastructure, (ii) electricity, (iii) telecom and ICT infrastructure, (iv) cost of ICT
commodities and Internet connection, and (v) ICT related laws and regulations. However, e-policies and e-strategies are now being drafted with the concentration on the development of ICT infrastructure, contents and applications, and human capacity, and the promotion of the use of ICT in enterprise sector.

China

21. The presentation entitled “Information Society in China: A Prospective” was made by Mr. Mengxin Sun, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Affairs, China Association for Science & Technology (CAST). He informed that the Chinese Government attached great importance to the information industry. A comprehensive document titled “The Development Strategies for the National Information Society 2006-2020” was released in 2006, and it emphasized on nine key aspects of promoting informatization of the national economy; popularizing e-government; establishing advanced Internet culture; pushing ahead social informatization; popularizing information infrastructure; exploiting information resources more efficiently; improving information industry competition; building national information security system; improving people's ability in using information technology and cultivating more talents in information technology.

22. He further updated on the process, current status and problems in building an information society in the country. China had experienced a significant growth in numbers of computer users, internet users, fixed and mobile phones users. He mentioned specially that the national project “Connecting Every Village”, which was launched at the beginning of 2004, had brought telephones to 99.2% of China’s administrative villages towards the end of 2007. Broadband became the main Internet access in the big and middle cities, and the China Next Generation Internet (CNGI) Project was approved in 2003. Despite the above-mentioned recent developments, digital divide still existed within the country, in terms of fixed line telephone density, mobile penetration, or Internet broadband usage. The others, such as information infrastructure development, Internet copyright, and development of ICT in rural areas were also the major concerns.

23. Mr. Sun provided a snapshot of some of China’s successful stories including Rural information society building in Jiangsu Province; Role of the Government, Zunyi farmers selling their peppers online; and Yan’an, a case of educational information network building. In conclusion, he proposed that the ICT development priorities must be identified and all related activities be streamlined. The promotion of international cooperation is important and necessary, especially in areas of technology transfer, personnel assistance, funding support from the developed countries to developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs).

India

24. Shailendra K. Hajela from India presented the “Status of WSIS Goals & Action Plan Implementation: India 2009”. At the beginning of his presentation he provided the background information of the Indian Telecom sector that was providing mainly Plain Ordinary Telephone Service (POTS) grew at a very slow rate under state monopoly. There
were large waiting lists in urban as well as in rural areas, mainly due to financial constraints. Major challenge was to accelerate the rate of growth in telecom sector. The Teledensity was less than 2% with combined fixed line subscribers base of 14.54 million provided by the Department of Telecom and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. The former was the policy maker, regulator and operator, all in one. There were only basic fixed and hardly any value added services.

Mr. Hajela informed that the Indian Economy was liberalized in early 1992. Telecom sector reform allowing private sector entry kick started with cellular mobile services. Gainful Impact of reforms became visible in late 90s. Independent Regulatory Authority was established in 1997 by an Act. Government Policy Initiatives, Telecom Sector Restructuring and India’s science & technology culture paved the way and laid a strong foundation for development of ICTs. All the constituents comprising the sector had been playing their assigned roles with due diligence and harmony: Furthermore, with the objective of increasing rural connectivity through state-of-the-art Mobile Services in rural and remote areas having no mobile coverage, the Universal Service Administrator had taken the following measures: proposal to provide USOF assistance for shareable and non-shareable components and subsidize on competitive basis among Licensees, Infrastructure (Base Station Towers) on sharing basis (to be shared amongst 3 service providers). He mentioned that the WSIS goals were likely to be met far ahead of time in India.

Indonesia

25. Mr. Sardjoeni Moedjiono, Senior Advisor, Minister for International Relations and Digital Divide, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) made a presentation on “Strategy and Policy toward the Indonesian Information Society”. Starting with country overview, he noted that the total IT market in Indonesia for 2007 amounted to US$1.9 billion with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10% from 2002 to 2007 (source: IDC). Based on the future of convergence technology and the NGN technology, the country had yet to fulfill the regulations as well as the services accordingly. The law of convergence was being prepared in addition or to replace the current laws and regulations as well as the services on telecommunication, on cyber (information and transaction), and on broadcasting. The National ICT Council chaired by Minister of MCIT formulated 7 (seven) flagship programmes including e-Education, e-Budgeting, e-Procurement, National Identity Number, National Single Window, Software Legalization, and Palapa Ring Project. He added that all of ICT programs coordinated by National ICT Council are based on the National ICT Roadmap towards Indonesian Information Society 2015, whose objectives are in line with Indonesia ICT Blueprint and targets of the WSIS Action Plan.

26. Mr. Moedjiono concluded his presentation with the proposal to promote the development of Internet multilingualism to protect culture and to create language diversity. For example, Internet content must be accessible not only in English language, but also in local language. In addition, building a regional cooperation on the development of Internet governance was in his major concern.
Lao PDR

27. Representing Department of Informatic, National Authority for Science and Technology (NAST), Mr. Somlouay Kittignavong shared national experiences on ICT development in Lao PDR. He stressed that the Government of Lao PDR had strongly realized the importance of ICT as one of the driving forces of economic growth, especially to advance beyond the status of least developed country (LDC) by the year 2020. The national ICT policy had recently been endorsed to ensure that the necessary institutional, human capacity, sectoral conditions, and legal frameworks are in place to leverage and apply ICT to meet the challenges and needs of Lao PDR. The Policy concentrated on nine areas including (i) infrastructure and access, (ii) enterprise and industry, (iii) research and development, (iv) IT applications, (v) human resources development, (vi) legal framework, (vii) awareness, (viii) poverty alleviation, (ix) standardization and localization.

28. Mr. Kittignavong also updated the meeting on the current ICT industry in Lao PDR, followed by major e-government initiatives. He noted that by December 2009, government organizations should be ready to provide e-applications taking into account the following online services; (i) e-Portal to provide a unique access point via the Internet to all government information and e-services, (ii) e-Registration, a web based application in both Lao and English, (iii) e-Documents system, consisting of two components: establishing the information management system and instituting a system for use of electronic signatures and system verification, (iv) e-Map for storing and managing maps and statistical data.

29. He also updated on initiatives related to the use of ICT in education, for example, in higher education, non formal education, School Net, as well as to other development such as the collaboration with ADB to set up 16 e-health centers in two provinces and with National Informatic Center of India to set up 10 rural tele-centres in 7 provinces. In conclusion, he indicated the following challenges in Lao PDR would require further assistance.
  • Limited Development of IT Skills and Human resources
  • Limitation in terms of Finance
  • Development of legal infrastructure for ICT development platform
  • Data Standardization
  • Establish Certification Authority (CA), mutual recognition within ASEAN and other countries
  • Establish Software Park (Software Industry)

Malaysia

30. Mr. Muhammad Aziphs Dato Mustapha, Senior Manager, Multimedia Development Corporation, shared country experiences on several initiatives on ICT development in Malaysia. He gave a summary of MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) Malaysia. He highlighted that MSC Malaysia’s vision would be a global test bed for the new roles of government; new cyber laws and guarantees; G2B and B2B collaborations; new broadcasting; education; delivery of healthcare; and new technologies. With a total of three phases of milestones and national roll out running from 1996 to 2020, MSC Malaysia had entered into the second phase (2004-2010) which underlined the objective to grow
Malaysia into a global ICT hub. To date, MSC Malaysia had rolled out to 15 cyber-cities and cyber-centers nation-wide which would serve as catalysts in bridging the country's digital divide, enhance the nation's growth and competitiveness besides serving as the platform to cultivate a performance culture in service delivery. In view of Malaysia’s broadband initiative, the National Broadband Plan was set to (i) generate adequate supply in terms of broadband infrastructure via various available technologies deemed appropriate; (ii) stimulate demand to ensure efficient take-up of broadband services via suitable content & applications services; (iii) explore various funding mechanisms to finance the project; and (iv) identify gaps in existing regulations and where necessary, introduce new ones to facilitate broadband rollout. He noted that 50% of all Malaysian household should have broadband connection by 2010.

31. To transform Malaysia into a knowledge based socio-economy, Mr. Mustapha added that MSC Malaysia had achieved excellence in innovation through four flagship applications including E-Government, Smart School, Tele-health, and Smart Card. Those developments have opened a gateway for creative and innovative producers and users of multimedia technology. He noted that the e-Procurement application witnessed a huge increase in transaction value, where in 2008 some RM 6 Billion worth of contracts were transacted. Regarding the use of ICT in human capital development, he explained that a comprehensive knowledge workers development framework had been developed through the tight collaboration amongst the various government agencies such as MOE, MOHE, MOHR to ensure that the national curriculum met the demand of the industry. The framework took a holistic view from pre-school all the way up to tertiary education and life-long learning. Mr. Mustapha ended his presentation with a short description of Malaysia’s successful stories/initiatives including Knowledge Workers Development Initiative, Nurturing Local IPs Creation, Technopreneur (Technology Entrepreneur) Development, ICT Empowers Society – Agribazaar, ICT Empowers Society – Rural Internet Centres (PID), My Health Portal, Expansion of SmartCard Flagship – Agriculture, Expansion of SmartCard Flagship – Fisheries.

Nepal

32. Mr. Purushottam Ghimire, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment shared the meeting participants on national ICT experiences in Nepal. He stated that the 11st Third Year Interim Plan (2007-09) concentrated on the development of ICT sector to achieve overall development targets. The Plan’s major goals included the use of ICT as a tool for development, the establishment of Government Integrated Data and Training centre (GIDTC), the establishment of 300 tele-centres and enhancement of the existing 27 tele-centres, the set up of computerized government in 300 offices, the implementation of e-government Master Plan.

33. Following the 11st Third Year Interim Plan, he informed the meeting about IT policy 2000 as a milestone in the context of Nepalese IT scenario. Key achievements through the policy implementation included the establishment of the first phase of IT Park and the launch of cyber law (Electronic transaction and Digital Signature Act). Mr. Ghimire also touched upon the current status of ICT infrastructure in Nepal, and shared a list of e-government
initiatives, some of which included e-procurement (www.bolpatra.gov.np), immigration control (www.immi.gov.np), postal service (www.nepalpost.gov.np). He also addressed that digital gap was one of the major concerns to limit the development of Information Society in Nepal. There was also a need to identify and implement quick-impact projects, strengthen institutional frameworks and ownership of regional cooperation, mobilize resources for regional cooperation, and facilitate cross regional cooperation.

**Pakistan**

34. Representing the Ministry of Information Technology, Government of Pakistan, Mr. Tariq Badsha, Member (IT) stated that while Pakistan had not developed a separate Action Plan to implement the goals of the WSIS, it had reflected the goals of the WSIS and the MDGs in the Medium Term Development Framework and other related policy documents. Besides the update on ICT Readiness indicators, he also highlighted some major thrust areas, especially the establishment of the Universal Service Fund (USF) and its accomplishments in providing telecom facilities and access in the under served and rural areas. He stated that the broadband penetration, while still relatively low, had grown at the rate of 59% in the past couple of years.

35. Mr. Badsha also touched upon major ICT initiatives and developments that the country had undertaken in compliance with the implementation of WSIS targets. He cited infrastructure issues (like shortage of power), financial limitations, human resource capacity, and security as the impediments in implementing the goals of WSIS.

36. In conclusion, Mr. Badsha made the following recommendations:
   - Reduce cost of Access devices through innovation e.g. reuse of used equipment with light weight software
   - Develop Broadband infrastructure and create applications in education, health and social welfare.
   - Create awareness. Citizens should be able to perceive the value of ICT through these applications.
   - Maintain the emphasis on ICT in all levels of education - from school to University
   - Develop public-private partnerships
   - Strengthen linkages between Academia and Industry to promote innovation and solutions
   - Make use of online resources, like the Virtual University of Pakistan, which has an enrollment of 30,000
   - Develop training programmes for citizens, students, government officials to produce ICT enabled manpower.

**Philippines**

37. Mr. Jorge M. Navarette, Associate Economic Officer, IDD, ESCAP made a presentation entitled “Philippines’ National Action Plan & Progress towards Building Information Society” on behalf of the Philippines expert who could not attend this meeting. The presentation focused on achievements of ICT projects and the implementation of
Community e-Centres. It also included a list of regulations issued to facilitate development of broadband networks and services, as well as strategies in implementing Community e-Centre in areas of policy, operation, technical, financial and marketing development in Philippines.

Republic of Korea

38. Mr. Nam Sang-Yirl, Senior Researcher, Head of Communications and Trade Research Center, Korea Information Society Development Institute, made a presentation entitled “WSIS, ICT Development Index (IDI) and Implications for Regional Cooperation”. He reiterated the importance of both ICT’s role towards social and economic development and the WSIS as a key landmark in global effort to eradicate poverty and achieve the UN MDG by 2015. He touched upon the recent development in global ICT sector and efforts to measure progress towards information society. Comparing on IDI between 2002 and 2007, Mr. Sang-Yirl noted that the Republic of Korea came to 2nd position in 2007, up two steps from 2002. A significant increase in broadband penetration has been made during the past few years; as a result the country stands the second after Japan in mobile broadband penetration.

39. Mr. Sang-Yirl also emphasized on the importance of global cooperation and government role to develop ICT sector. The Korean government assumed a new role to play as an enabler or supporter in developing ICT sector. The country had led the global cooperation to share its experiences on ICT development. For example, the Republic of Korea had been operating ICT policy consultation programs with ASEAN, Central Asia, Central and South America, and African countries. It also contributed to human resource development or building ICT capacity through the Asia-Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication technology for Development (APCICT).

40. Based on the Republic of Korea’s experiences of ICT development and policy consultation with other countries, Mr. Sang-Yirl proposed to (i) enhance ICT awareness among people, (ii) build human capacity to better utilize ICTs along with the development of physical infrastructure, (iii) recognize the role of government to establish an ICT user friendly environment, (iv) actively participate with private sector or any public-private partnerships, (v) identify and prioritize needs of regional cooperation, (vi) utilize ICTs to address current global issues such as global economic crisis, (vii) climate change, green ICTs, etc.

Sri Lanka

41. Mr. Manruk Resha Dewapura, Chief Operating Officer, ICT Agency of Sri Lanka made a presentation entitled “Regional Cooperation towards Building an Information Society in Asia and the Pacific”. He highlighted that Sri Lanka’s overall rank of Networked Readiness Index (NRI) has improved dramatically from 86th position out of 122 in 2006/2007 to 72nd position out of 134 countries in 2008/2009. The country’s ICT literacy rate had been growing steadily from 5% in 2005 to 28% in 2009. Mr. Dewapura further briefed on the recent achievements in perspectives of government, industry/education, and society and made a comparison on overall national achievements against the WSIS.
plan/targets. A special focus was made on the emphasis on the case of e-Sri Lanka, its vision and focus as the country’s ICT development roadmap.

42. Following the case of e-Sri Lanka, he also updated the participants on progress the county has made towards WSIS Action lines and concluded his presentation with proposing what Sri Lanka can offer in term of regional cooperation in Asia and Pacific as follows;
   - Share Best Practices, Lessons Learnt in planning designing and Implementing integrated e-Development Initiatives, at regional events
   - Facilitate study tours and visits to Sri Lanka to learn and observe first hand the e-Sri Lanka experience in general and project success stories in particular.
   - Opportunity to leverage the benefit of the Asia Pacific Tele-centre Network secretariat being hosted at the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka
   - Opportunity to leverage the benefit of one of only three Tele-center.org Academies in Asia Pacific which is set-up in Sri Lanka
   - Invitation to attend e-Asia 2009, the largest ICT4D conference to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 2nd - 4th December 2009.

Thailand (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology)

43. Ms. Areewan Haorangsi, Executive Director, International Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology made a presentation entitled ”Thailand’s Experiences on National Plans and Progress towards Building Information Society. The presentation emphasized on the current situations in the implementation of WSIS outcomes, and recommendation for regional collaboration. She mentioned that the 2nd national ICT Master Plan (2009-2013) had been formulated and on process to submit for the Cabinet’s approval. Its objective was to drive the country towards the idea of “Smart Thailand”. Lack of sufficient information infrastructure and limited coverage of ICT access were major constraints to limit the use of ICT for building up knowledge, developing enterprises, and serving the government. However, MICT launched some initiative projects to cope with them. They were as follows; (i) Backbone Expansion: Quantity and Quality Improvement through new technologies, (ii) Last mile access: reaching the remote areas; and (iii) the use of ICT in disadvantaged group.

44. In view of building capacity, the philosophy of “life long learning” has been added on agenda of Thailand educational reform. At least 50 percent of Thai population was targeted to have capacity to access, create, and use of information, in the ways to benefit their education, work, and everyday life. The country had also made some progress on law establishment and enforcement. She noted that MICT is developing the national ICT Security Master Plan, which would be used as a guideline for organizations, government and private sectors. In addition to, the country had witnessed a significant progress in implementing projects related to ICT applications, such as e-government, e-business, e-education, e-health, e-environment, and e-agriculture. To strengthen a regional collaboration, Ms. Areewan proposed to have a forum/mechanism to share experiences and exchange information and knowledge among policy makers.
The presentation on “Enhancing Digital Opportunities in Thailand: The Role of ICT R&D” was presented by Mr. Pansak Siriruchatapong, Executive Director, National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC). Following an introduction of NECTEC profile, he briefed the meeting on some examples of NECTEC’s research and development works in compliance with the implementation of WSIS targets in particular under the action line C4: Capacity Building, C7: the development of ICT Applications, and C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content.

Among many others, he highlighted on the following development projects:
- **eDLTV** (e-Distance Learning TV, http://edltv.thai.net/), a project integrating digitized contents from DLTV (distance education via satellite technology) into e-learning platform developed by NECTEC;
- **e-Agriculture**, a project engaging on how small scale farmers could enhance their competitiveness through the use of information technology to increase agribusiness supply chain effectiveness, develop rural livelihood;
- **the first trial of an automatic English to Thai machine translation service named ParSit**. Through the ParSit service, the requested English web pages were automatically translated into Thai by keeping the web page original layout; and
- **e-Inclusion – Mae Hong Sorn IT Valley**, the National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre’s IT Valley project aimed at promoting the province as a technology-development centre. WiMAX wireless broadband network would be deployed in Mae Hong Son, a mountainous province in Thailand’s northwest, bordering Myanmar.

To moving forward, Mr. Siriruchatapong proposed to continue efforts to develop IT skilled human resources, not only in aspect of technology providers but also consumers, to establish and maintain a good cooperation and collaboration among agencies/departments/ministries. He added that political environment should also be in stable at all time.