

## Asia-Pacific Regional Community Networks (CN) Summit

### Innovating to connect the unconnected

#### Background

Home to over 4 billion people and covering more than 50 countries and territories, the Asia-Pacific is the largest and most diverse region of the globe. The region is home to countries like China, India, Indonesia and Japan, which account for more than half of the world's mobile subscriber base (GSMA<sup>1</sup>), while on the other hand, only 7% of people in the region have fixed broadband access (ESCAP<sup>2</sup>).

Connecting the unconnected remains one of the major challenge for both governments and the industry. The coalescence of connectivity and socio-economic inclusiveness, particularly for the last two billion, underlines the need for transformative Internet access through integrative policies, user-driven tools, and innovative solutions that can be rapidly deployed and appropriated by under and un-served communities across the world.

ESCAP member countries have recognized the need for a concerted regional effort on promoting ICT connectivity for sustainable development. The Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative supports an environment that will lead to the promotion of inclusive access for all, acknowledging the special needs and challenges faced by least developed and developing countries. In addition to enhancing international fibre-optic backbone connectivity, the initiative under its 'Broadband for All and Interconnection' pillars, also drives the development of domestic ICT infrastructure in related countries, including domestic backbone and backhaul networks, access networks and Internet data centres, among others.<sup>3</sup>

The last mile access issue is common in economies that continue to have low Internet penetration. Over the last few years, Community Networks (CN) have emerged as a complementary way to connect people and to allow for low-cost community-driven solutions to be developed to connect people in underserved locations.

A number of CNs have emerged around the Asia-Pacific region as low cost - and typically self-managed networks - providing Internet access where commercial networks generally do not find it economically viable to operate. These networks are also supplementing 'universal access' goals, and providing digital opportunities for rural communities to empower themselves.

However, these community-led solutions do face a number of challenges that require policymakers and regulators consideration so that they may flourish. These local networks can be used to improve delivery of Internet services and inspire creation of local content, as well other digital services – including online education and access to government services.

**When: 29 August**

**Where: United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) Bangkok, Thailand**

The summit will consist of opening and plenary sessions, as well as a roundtable discussion. It will be a one day program covering a range of topical issues related to Community Networks and their future in the Asia-Pacific region.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/asiapacific/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/ict-disaster-risk-reduction/asia-pacific-information-superhighway/asia-pacific-information-superhighway-maps>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Master\\_Plan\\_for\\_APIIS\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Master_Plan_for_APIIS_English_0.pdf)

The event will be jointly organised by ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and the Internet Society, and hosted by ESCAP in conjunction with the third session of the AP-IS steering committee meeting. This will elevate its overall value, ensuring high-level participation and stakeholder engagement from the region.

## Objective

Asia-Pacific Regional Community Networks (CN) Summit will serve as a multi-stakeholder dialogue on CNs; covering technology, best practices, regulations and socio-economic issues.

The summit will discuss Community Network policy options for infrastructure sharing, spectrum allocation and universal service funds, as well as highlight CN projects in the region as best practice. The summit will also demonstrate CNs as one of the complementary connectivity models to contribute to and support the global targets defined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Program

<b>8:45 - 10:00</b>	<b>Refreshment and Networking Session</b>
<b>10:00 - 10:30</b>	<p>Inaugural Session</p> <p>Speakers:  Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, UNESCAP  Mr. Rajnesh Singh, Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, Internet Society  Ms. Kalaya Chinatiworn, Executive Director of International Affairs Division, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, Thailand</p>
<b>10:30 - 11:30</b>	<p><b>Plenary 1: Setting the scene – Innovating to connect the unconnected</b></p> <p>The session will feature discussions on CN technology, models, content (services) and best practice in the Asia-Pacific region.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Duncan Macintosh, Executive Director, APNIC Foundation</p> <p>Speakers:  Mr. Mahabir Pun, Founder, Nepal Wireless Networking Project  Prof. Kanchana Kanchanasut, IntERLab Asian Institute of Technology</p> <p>Mr. John Jack, Deputy Chief Information Officer, Government of Vanuatu  Mr. John Garrity, Advisor, Connectivity Capital</p>
<b>11:30 – 12:00</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>12:00 - 13:00</b>	<p><b>Plenary 2: Community Networks and SDGs</b></p> <p>The session will deliberate how CNs can play a role in supporting socio-economic development and the UN SDGs.</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Duangthip Chomprang, Director, Office of International Cooperation, International Institute for Trade and Development</p> <p>Speakers:</p>

	<p>Mr. Heon-Jun Kim, Senior Program Management Expert, UN Project Office on Governance</p> <p>Mr. Babu Ram Aryal, Founding Member, Internet Society Nepal</p> <p>Dr. Sarbani Banerjee Belur, Senior Research Scientist, Garm Marg Rural Braodband Project, India</p> <p>Mr. Waqas Hassan, Assistant Director, International Liasion, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority</p>
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>14:00 - 15:00</b>	<p><b>Plenary 3: Policy and Regulatory Support</b></p> <p>The session will discuss CN policy and regulatory support around licensing, infrastructure sharing, spectrum allocation, the use of universal service funds and creating an enabling regulatory environment.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Parvez Iftikhar, ICT Consultant</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Dr. Rekha Jain, Professor and Executive Chair, IIMA Idea Telecom Centre of Excellence, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad</p> <p>Mr. Veari Iru, Manager Projects, National Informational Communicational Technology Authority, Papua New Guinea</p> <p>Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam, Public Policy Manager, Access Partnership</p> <p>Dr. Carlos Rey-Moreno, Policy and Regulation Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications</p>
<b>15:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>15:30 – 16:30</b>	<p><b>Roundtable: Future Prospects for alternative last mile access in the Asia-Pacific</b></p> <p>This session will capture the overall thematic discussions of the summit and be a high-level discussion on the future of alternative and complementary last mile access networks in the Asia-Pacific and the role they can play in achieving “Broadband for All”.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Naveed Haq, Regional Development Manager, Internet Society</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Chief, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, UNESCAP</p> <p>Mr. Kondo Masanori, Deputy Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity</p> <p>Mr. Jigme Tenzing, Director, Department of IT and Telecom, Ministry of Information and Communications, Bhutan</p> <p>Mr. Osama Manzar, Founder, Digital Empowerment Foundation</p>