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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation

Astana, 3–5 September 2024

Report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

A. Matters calling for action by the Commission

1. The following recommendation made at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation is brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for its consideration and possible action:

Recommendation

The participants in the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation recommend that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at its eighty-first session, endorse the Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

2. The following decision adopted at the Ministerial Conference is brought to the attention of the Commission:

Decision

The participants in the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation adopt the Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific.

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II. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the Ministerial Conference

3. The Ministerial Conference, which was held in Astana from 3 to 5 September 2024, was opened by the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Olzhas Bektenov. The Executive Secretary of the Commission made a statement.

B. Attendance

4. Representatives of the following member States attended: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Georgia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu.

5. Representatives of the following Permanent Observers attended: Hungary, Israel and Portugal, as well as the European Union. Representatives of the Holy See, an observer to the United Nations, also attended.

6. A representative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, an office of the Secretariat, also attended.

7. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds also attended: International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

8. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations also attended: Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia and Eurasian Development Bank.

9. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities also attended: eWorldwide Group, Internet Society, Muslim World League and Women in Business.

10. In accordance with rule 12 of the Commission's rules of procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.

11. The participants in the Ministerial Conference took note of the oral report of the bureau on credentials.

C. Election of officers

12. The participants in the Ministerial Conference elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Zhaslan Madiyev (Kazakhstan)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Millicent Cruz-Paredes (Philippines) Mr. Sanghoon Song (Republic of Korea) Mr. Poumulinuku Onesemo (Samoa)

D. Agenda

13. The participants in the Ministerial Conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation:

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

2. Policy perspectives on building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Digital solutions for sustainable development.

4. Strengthening regional digital cooperation for sustainable development.

5. Adoption of the Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific.

6. Other matters.

7. Adoption of the report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation.

E. Other events

14. The following side events were held in conjunction with the Ministerial Conference:

(a) 3 September 2024: side event on the use of digital technologies for infrastructure connectivity, productivity and growth, organized by the secretariat of the Commission and the Internet Society;

(b) 3 September 2024: side event on empowering women entrepreneurs through digital transformation, featuring the North and Central Asia launch of the Women ICT Frontier Initiative, organized by the secretariat of the Commission and the eWorldwide Group;

(c) 3 September 2024: high-level forum on emerging technology for tackling air pollution and climate change, organized by the secretariat of the Commission and the Governments of Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and Thailand;

(d) 3 September 2024: side event on government technology solutions to leave no one behind, organized by the United Nations Development Programme in Kazakhstan in collaboration with the Government of Kazakhstan;

(e) 4 September 2024: side event on digital public services for the enhanced competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, organized by the secretariat of the Commission and the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan;

(f) 4 September 2024: side event on the 20-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society, featuring reflections on 20 years of successes, failures and expectations in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society process, organized by the secretariats of the Commission, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Telecommunication Union;

(g) 4 September 2024: side event on facilitating cooperation on artificial intelligence and data-sharing in the Asia-Pacific region, organized by the secretariat of the Commission and the Governments of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea.

III. Account of proceedings

15. The discussions held during the Ministerial Conference have been summarized in an account of proceedings (see annex II).

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	*Title*	*Agenda item*
General series		
ESCAP/MCDIT/1	Provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/MCDIT/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/MCDIT/2	Policy perspectives on building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals	2
ESCAP/MCDIT/3	Digital solutions for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific	3
ESCAP/MCDIT/4	Progress made in strengthening regional digital cooperation in Asia and the Pacific	4
ESCAP/MCDIT/5	Report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation	
ESCAP/MCDIT/5/Add.1	Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific	
Limited series		
ESCAP/MCDIT/L.1	Draft report	7
ESCAP/MCDIT/L.2	Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific	5
Information available online		
https://unescap.org/events/2024/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-digital-inclusion-and-transformation	Information for participants, list of participants and tentative programme	

Annex II

Account of proceedings

I. Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation was held in Astana from 3 to 5 September 2024.

II. Summary of discussions

A. Opening of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation (agenda item 1)

2. On 3 September 2024, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Olzhas Bektenov, and the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific delivered opening statements. The Chair delivered welcoming remarks and presided over the opening of the Ministerial Conference.

3. The Prime Minister of Kazakhstan and the Executive Secretary of the Commission announced the launch of the *Asia-Pacific Digital Transformation Report 2024*.

B. Policy perspectives on building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (agenda item 2)

4. The participants in the Ministerial Conference had before them the note by the secretariat on policy perspectives on building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (ESCAP/MCDIT/2).

5. The participants benefited from a high-level panel discussion on policy perspectives from across the region and initiatives that had been implemented by Governments to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The high-level panel was moderated by the Minister of Communication and Information Technology of Samoa, Mr. Poumulinuku Onesemo. Statements were made by: Deputy Minister of the Office of ICT Policy, Ministry of Science and ICT of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Sanghoon Song; Minister of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan, Mr. Sherzod Shermatov; Ambassador and Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy, Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, State Department of the United States of America, Mr. Stephan Lang; and Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Ms. Nur Sulyna Abdullah.

7. Video messages were played from the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, and the Chief of the Digital Government Branch, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

8. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Philippines, Russian Federation, Thailand, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States.

9. The participants in the Ministerial Conference recognized the importance of bridging the digital divide and strengthening digital literacy in order to leverage the opportunities presented by digital technologies to address major global challenges, such as climate change, inequality and poverty, as well as to foster economic diversification and sustainable growth, enhance public service delivery and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. The participants recognized the importance of multilateral cooperation for inclusive digital transformation through regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, and expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its continued support to Pacific island countries in improving Internet traffic management through the Pacific Internet exchange point project.

C. Digital solutions for sustainable development (agenda item 3)

11. The participants in the Ministerial Conference had before them the note by the secretariat on digital solutions for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCDIT/3).

12. The participants benefited from a high-level panel discussion on the sharing of national practices relating to digital solutions for sustainable development.

13. The high-level panel was moderated by the Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan, Mr. Zhaslan Madiyev. Statements were made by: Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure of the Federated States of Micronesia, Mr. Carlson D. Apis; Minister of Digital Development of Kyrgyzstan, Ms. Nuria Kutnaeva; Minister of Justice and Community Services of Vanuatu, Mr. John Vacher Amos; and First Vice-Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kanysh Tuleushin.

14. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, Republic of Korea and Tajikistan.

15. The participants in the Ministerial Conference acknowledged that the Asia-Pacific region, as a hub for digital innovations, could effectively address development challenges and recognized that digital tools were crucial for improving governance and access to education and health care, boosting sustainable economic growth and enhancing climate resilience.

16. The participants recognized that digital solutions could be leveraged to promote sustainable development by enhancing access to financial services for members of different income groups, promoting gender equality and empowerment and improving health-care and education services. They expressed the readiness of their Governments to share good practices and collaborate to promote digital transformation across the region.

D. Strengthening regional digital cooperation for sustainable development (agenda item 4)

17. The participants in the Ministerial Conference had before them the note by the secretariat on progress made in strengthening regional digital cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCDIT/4).

18. The participants benefited from a high-level panel discussion on regional initiatives and partnerships among stakeholders to accelerate digital inclusion and transformation for a sustainable future.

19. The high-level panel was moderated by the Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan. Statements were made by: Advisor to the President and Director of Agency of Innovation and Digital Technologies under the President of Tajikistan, Mr. Khurshed Mirzo; Special Envoy of Tuvalu, Mr. Monise Tuivaka Laafai; and Minister of State, Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology of Maldives, Mr. Mohamed Kinaanath.

20. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Armenia, Fiji, Georgia and Republic of Korea.

21. The participants in the Ministerial Conference highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships and multi-stakeholder cooperation on digital innovation and transformation for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They emphasized the role of the secretariat in promoting regional cooperation through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, which involved strengthening communication and collaboration among members and associate members, supporting their capacity-building and promoting digital cooperation and collaboration to drive economic growth.

E. Adoption of the Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 5)

22. The Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific was adopted on 4 September 2024.

F. Other matters (agenda item 6)

23. The representative of the Philippines informed the Ministerial Conference of the progress made by his Government in digital transformation.

G. Adoption of the report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation (agenda item 7)

24. The report on the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation was adopted on 4 September 2024.