Subregional Workshop on ICT Co-deployment along Passive Infrastructure in South Asia
27 June 2019
AITD, Dwarka, New Delhi

Concept Note

1. Background

Expanding ICT connectivity has played strategically significant role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region. ICT enables growth across sectors through accelerated innovation that increases productivity and efficiency. It provides a foundation for digital economy and society that bring socio-economic transformations in many significant ways including advancing health, education, financial services, smart agriculture, and energy systems; accelerating online communities, commerce, finance, and a wide range of services; economizing resource allocation and usage; and promoting public awareness and engagement.

However, investment in ICT infrastructure development is costly and time consuming and is further complicated by negotiations required when it comes to cross-border connectivity. One of the means to expand broadband connectivity is to leverage cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies; that is, through co-deployment of fibre optic cables (FOCs) along passive infrastructure such as roads, railways, power grids and oil and gas pipelines.

Co-deployment could save costs of infrastructure deployment by minimizing duplicated civil works and environmental impacts via a one-time investment and construction. Through significant cost saving opportunities, it would allow countries to scale up and access more quickly and efficiently infrastructure networks, both within and across national boundaries. It also serves a wide range of complimentary purposes which benefits other infrastructure sectors that needs high-speed broadband and ICT services. For instance, transport entities can leverage FOC network to develop intelligent transport systems and other applications for modern transport. As such, co-deployment results in a win-win outcome for all involved sectors.

However, various challenges and constraints are encountered by some member countries. The challenges do not only emerge from financial issues, but political and institutional issues have also been an obstacle. Therefore, raising awareness and knowledge of policy makers on the practical implications of cross-border co-deployment would facilitate informed decisions and ensure that countries take a mutually beneficial approach to materialize the practice of co-deployment in cross-border projects. At the same time, the capacity development will contribute to an informed consideration of the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework Document 2019-2022.

2. Objective:

Against this background and considering the potential opportunities of co-deployment to promote regional infrastructure connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and Pacific, ESCAP's ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, together with ESCAP's Transport Division and Subregional Office, will organize a "Subregional Workshop on ICT Co-deployment along Passive Infrastructure in South Asia", in New Delhi, India, with the objective to raise awareness and facilitate constructive dialogue between government officials responsible for ICT and Transport respectively on opportunities and challenges for implementing policies on cross-border infrastructure co-deployment. In addition, to discuss the policy implications of cross-border ICT co-deployment on national and regional legislative and regulatory frameworks.

3. Venue and Date

- Venue: AITD, Dwarka, New Delhi, India
- Date: *27 June 2019*

4. Targeted participants

The meeting is intended for senior-level government officials from Ministries or Agencies involved with developing ICT connectivity, road and railway infrastructure of selected ESCAP member countries in the subregion, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Relevant development partners and private sector will also be invited.

5. Tentative programme

Time	*27 June 2019*
08:30-09:00	Registration

09:00-10:00	**Session 1: Opening session (Auditorium)**
	
	• Welcoming remarks:
	   o **Mr. K. L. Thapar**, Founder and Chairman, Asian Institute of Transport Development
	   o **Mr. Nagesh Kumar**, Head of Office, Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia ESCAP
	
	• Opening address:
	   o **Mr. Rajneesh**, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India
	
	• Inaugural address:
	   o **Mr. R. K. Pandey**, Member (Projects), National Highways Authority of India
	
	• Introductory remarks:
	   o **Ms. Tiziana Bonapace**, Director, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division
	
	• Self-introduction by all participants
	
	• Group picture

10:00-10:20	*Coffee/Tea Break*

10:20-12:00	**Session 2: Transboundary Infrastructure Co-deployment in ICT and Transport Sectors: Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal, Regulatory and Policy Harmonization**
	
	Moderator: Mr. Arun Saxena, Advisor (Signal), RailTel Enterprises Limited, India
	
	• **Presentations by ESCAP (ICT/Transport):**
	   o ICT – **Mr. Siope Vakataki 'Ofa**, Economic Affairs Officer, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP
	   o Transport – **Mr. Sandeep Jain**, Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Division, ESCAP
	
	• **Presentations by Experts and Resource Persons:**
	   o **Prof. K. M. Baharul Islam**, Dean, Indian Institute of Management Kashipur, "Bangladesh-India co-deployment"
	   o **Mr. Abdelmoula Ghzala**, Transport Expert
	   o **Mr. A.S. Verma**, Deputy Director General (Mobile Technologies), Ministry of Telecommunications, India

	• **Discussions**
12:00-13:00	*Lunch Break*

13:00-14:30	**Session 3: Country Experiences on Trans-boundary Infrastructure Co-deployment**
	
	• Sharing of information and experiences by participants on national legal and regulatory framework, strategic and policy initiatives, and/or governance structure that incentivize or disincentivize infrastructure co-deployment across sectors and national boundaries
	
	Moderator: Mr. A.S. Verma, Deputy Director General (Mobile Technologies), Ministry of Telecommunications, India
	
	• **Presentation by:**
	    o **Mr. Suresh Kumar**, Executive Director, RailTel Corporation of India Ltd.
	
	• **Presentations by country representatives of:**
	    o Afghanistan
	    o Bangladesh
	    o Bhutan
	    o India
	    o Maldives
	    o Nepal
	    o Pakistan
	    o Sri Lankan
	
	• **Discussions**

14:30-14:45	*Coffee/Tea Break*

14:45-16:45	**Session 4: Ways Forward**
	• Identifying the legal, regulatory and policy gaps for co-deployment
	• Discussion on action plan for way forward to promote or enable trans-boundary infrastructure co-deployment
	
	Moderator: Mr. B. N. Puri, Director (R), AITD, India
	
	• **Speakers:**
	    o **Ms. Tiziana Bonapace**, Director, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division
	    o **Mr. Arun Saxena**, Advisor (Signal), RailTel Enterprises Limited, India
	    o Country representatives

16:45-17:00	**Session 5: Closing by ESCAP**