

## Concept Note

### Expert Group Meeting: Advancing Co-deployment Financing through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway in North and Central Asia

31 January - 1 February 2019, in Almaty, Kazakhstan

#### 1. Overview

Widening the digital divide and digital inequality has been a persistent challenge and obstacle for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite overall progress made in developing broadband and ICT infrastructure in the region, the countries with special needs, such as least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, still lag far behind and fall below the region's average with almost no improvement in the past decade. This uneven progress is aggravated by the emergence of newer technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which requires availability, quality and speed of broadband services. Unaddressed, the digital divide and inequality could cascade into inequality in other social and economic dimensions and would increasingly become harder to bridge.

North and Central Asia is no exception from this trend. According to ESCAP studies, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are leading the broadband infrastructure development but the rest of the sub-region has not fully benefited from digital opportunities due to limited broadband availability and affordability among other factors. The landlocked developing countries in Central Asia are particularly dependent on the ease and costs of connecting to neighboring countries. As a result, these countries experience inadequate international bandwidth and high transit cost to access international links. Strengthening ICT infrastructure connectivity is expected to significantly improve broadband access and affordability in the region.

Recognizing the strategic significance of ICT connectivity in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region, the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative was established to enhance the availability, resilience and affordability of broadband connectivity in the region. One of the means to expand broadband connectivity is co-deployment of fibre optic cables (FOCs) along passive infrastructure such as roads, railways, pipelines and electric powerlines. Co-deployment could save costs of infrastructure deployment by minimizing duplicated civil works and environmental impacts. Through significant cost saving opportunities, co-deployment would allow countries to scale up infrastructure networks and access more quickly and efficiently, both within and across national boundary.

In this context, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is implementing a Development Account (DA) project entitled "Addressing the Transboundary Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific"<sup>1</sup>. The project aims to strengthen capacity of target countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia) to develop relevant policies and mechanisms for infrastructure connectivity and co-deployment. During the inception meeting in October 2018, the participants from the three target countries and their neighbors (China and the Russian Federation) identified a number of key policy issues and challenges that need to be addressed to promote co-deployment and inclusive and sustainable infrastructure development.

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<sup>1</sup> Information and materials related to the project and inception meeting can be found at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/development-account-project-addressing-transboundary-dimensions-2030-agenda-through-regional>

As a follow up to the project activities and in support of neighboring countries in the sub-region, ESCAP in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, will organize an Expert Group Meeting “Advancing Co-deployment Financing through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway in North and Central Asia” in Almaty on 31 January and 1 February 2019 with the following objectives:

- (a) to raise awareness among government officials and partners on opportunities and challenges associated with infrastructure co-deployment and relevant financing modalities in the North and Central Asia subregion;
- (b) to identify subregional and national initiatives or strategies which could benefit from integrating infrastructure co-deployment approach; and
- (c) to develop concrete plans of action, including policy updates and capacity development, within the framework of AP-IS.

**2. Venue and Date**

- Venue: Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Date: 31 January and 1 February 2019

**3. Targeted participants**

The meeting is intended for senior-level officials from ministries or agencies involved with ICT, transport and electricity power connectivity in North and Central Asia. Relevant development partners and private sector are also invited.

## Draft agenda

Time	31 January 2019
08:30-09:00	<i>Registration</i>
09:00-09:30	<p><b>Session 1: Introduction, MC - Mr. Osama Rajkhan (PhD)</b>, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division (SDD)/Subregional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA), ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Ms. Atsuko Okuda</b>, Chief of ICT for Development Section, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD), ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Mr. Norimasa Shimomura</b>, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative, Astana, Kazakhstan</li> <li>○ <b>Mr. Meyerbek Mukatov</b>, Deputy Director of International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Information and Communications, Kazakhstan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Self-introduction by all participants</li> <li>• Objectives of the meeting <b>Ms. Elena Dyakonova</b>, ICT Capacity Building Specialist, ICT and Development Section (IDD), ESCAP</li> </ul>
9:30-10:00	<i>Photo Session and Coffee/Tea Break</i>
10:00-12:00	<p><b>Session 2: Harnessing Synergies through Infrastructure Co-deployment</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Mr. Meyerbek Mukatov</b>, Deputy Director of International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Information and Communications, Kazakhstan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Presentation on Infrastructure Co-deployment aspects (15 min)</b> Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Chief of ICT for Development Section, ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation on Disaster Resilience: Kazakhstan specific infrastructure resilience issues and the intended outcomes of the ongoing ESCAP Development Account Project (15 min)</b> Mr. Sanjay Kumar Srivastava and Ms. Madhurima Sarkar Swaisgood, Disaster Risk Reduction Section, ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation “APCICT’s Capacity Building Initiatives” (15 min)</b> Mr. Kiyoungh Ko, Director, APCICT, (Skype, Remotely)</li> <li>• Q&amp;As <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Presentation on World Bank’s regional digital programs (15 min)</b> Mr. Juan Navas-Sabater, Lead ICT Policy Specialist, Digital Development, World Bank</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation on National Experiences related to Co-deployment (20 min)</b> Mr. Vladimir Kryuchkov, Chief Executive Officer, ITS-Russia</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation of ITU (15 min)</b> Mr. Kirill Oparin, Head, Regional Office CIS, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Q&amp;As</li> </ul>

12:00-13:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
13:00-14:00	<p><b><u>Session 3: Infrastructure Co-deployment and Financing</u></b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Mr. Kirill Oparin</b>, Head, Regional Office CIS, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Intervention on Transport Aspects of Co-deployment (5 min)</b> Mr. Bekhzod Rakhmatov, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Division (TD), ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Intervention on Infrastructure Financing (5 Min)</b> Mr. Ulukbek Usabaliev, Economic Affairs Officer, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division (MPFD), ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Intervention on Social Inclusion (5 Min)</b> Mr. Osama Rajkhan (PhD), Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division (SDD)/Subregional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA), ESCAP</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation from Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (10 min)</b> Mr. Dong-ik Lee, Director General of Investment Operations III, Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, Beijing, China</li> <li>○ <b>Presentation from Eurasian Development Bank (10 min)</b> Mr. Leonid Efimov, Deputy Head of International Cooperation Division</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
14:00-14:15	<i>Coffee/Tea Break</i>
14:15-15:30	<p><b><u>Session 4: Way Forward: Developing Plans of Action</u></b></p> <p><b>Moderator: TBD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sharing of information and national experience on infrastructure co-deployment, updates and achievements from previous meeting by project core countries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kazakhstan</li> <li>▪ Kyrgyzstan</li> <li>▪ Mongolia</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Discussions on concrete initiatives, pilots, policy updates and capacity development</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
15:30-16:00	<p><b><u>Session 5:</u></b></p> <p>MC - <b>Mr. Osama Rajkhan (PhD)</b>, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division (SDD)/Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, (SONCA), ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Summary</li> <li>○ Closing</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	<b>1 February 2019</b>
08:30-09:00	Registration
	Participating in the plenary sessions of the Summit