Regional Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
Implementation in Asia Pacific
28 August 2019, Bangkok

Digital Transformation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Summary Report

Session 1

Moderator: Ms. Gitanjali Sah, Strategy and Policy Coordinator, ITU

Opening Remarks

1. Mr. Malcolm Johnson, Deputy Secretary-General, ITU, expressed his appreciation towards
UNESCAP for its continuous support and welcomed participants to the WSIS Regional Review
meeting. He highlighted the importance of technology for social and economic development
that will benefit everyone. He shared the site visit experience to Village Bandontane, one
of the WSIS Prizes winning projects in Thailand that increased profits since it got connected to
the internet. In his remarks, he also invited everyone to contribute to the Open Consultation
Process for the WSIS Forum 2020. He stressed the multistakeholder approach of the Forum
and appreciated everyone’s inputs in ensuring a better Forum.

2. Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCAP, emphasized the importance of the
WSIS Regional Review meeting underlining this initiative as a clear manifestation of one UN
approach. He highlighted the Review as a mechanism to distil regional perspective and bring
regional voice to the global policy discourse. He underscored that Asia-Pacific region remains
as a region with high inequality and high vulnerability. Further, he stressed the need for
affordable access to digital network and services as this was also echoed in global level. He
stated that more innovations, resources, effective partnerships, investments, and action on
the ground are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speakers

3. Ms. Ajarin Pattanapanchai, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society,
Thailand provided information about Net Pracharat, a winning project of WSIS Prizes 2019 for
Action Line C2. Information and communication infrastructure. She stated that the aim of the
project is to provide high-speed internet network in rural area which could improve the well-
being of local Thai people, in particular on education, health, and government services. She
elaborated the success factors of this project that rely on: i) strong government policy to
provide digital infrastructure development throughout the country; (ii) various support from
government agencies; and (iii) support from all sector to utilise the internet. There was a view to put more attention on smart villages.

4. Ms Roshni Sen, Principle Secretary, Department of Technical Education, Training and Skill Development, West Bengal, India presented *Utkarsh Bangla*, a winning project of WSIS Prizes 2019 for Action Line C4. Capacity building. She informed the meeting that the project is an integrated skill development programme scheme targeting the unemployed rural youth, with great features on the e-Governance platform. The meeting noted that through the WSIS Prizes, the project has raised positive sentiment among stakeholders and seen a huge increment in website traffic, as well as the upsurge in response and enrollment.

5. Mr. Masanori Kondo, Deputy Secretary-General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) shared the challenges that APT encountered, in particular how to improve the implementation of projects in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner. He also pointed out the differences between Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the contrasting decision-making process, in which SDGs involved a wide range of stakeholders.

6. Prof. Dr. Wai Yie Leong, Dean of Engineering, Mahsa University shared the work of International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists (INWES) and World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) on Gender Mainstreaming and ICTs. She presented some results from the annual surveys conducted by INWES which aimed to understand women’s involvement in ICT, gender equality, and human resources. The meeting noted that these surveys helped to outline future planning, in particular planned activities.

7. Mr. Ted Chen, Focal Point for Technology and Science UN Major Group for Children & Youth, Co-founder and CEO Evercomm Singapore underlined his main work that focused on how to better engage youth, upscale youth, and how to accelerate the knowledge transfer. He also focused his presentation in sharing government-led initiative in one single country that sparked multiple collaborations in the region. Further, he emphasized the importance of cross-border collaboration to work in a better scale.


- **Open Consultation Process (OCP)**
  Please click here to [SUBMIT](#) - Request workshops/exhibition space/speakers and provide inputs on the format and themes **Deadline: 3 February 2020**

- **WSIS Prizes 2020**
  Please click here to [SUBMIT](#) your outstanding project that leverage the power of ICT  
  **Submission deadline: 22 November 2019**

- **WSIS Photo Contest 2020**
  Please click here to [SUBMIT](#) your photo that shows how ICTs are playing an enabling role in achieving the SDGs **Deadline: 3 February 2020**

- **High-Level Track Facilitators (HLTF)**
  Please click here to [NOMINATE](#) your representative for the HLTF
Deadline: 3 February 2020

- **WSIS Forum 2020: Visibility and Partnership packages**
  Please click here to see the Partnership Packages and discover the visibility offers

9. In response to the presentations by speakers, the following points were raised during the discussion session:

   - The issue of accessibility in relation to ICTs. The meeting noted the importance of ensuring equitable communications for everyone.
   - The issue of connectivity. It was highlighted that there is a need for international standards, in particular in the small villages, small islands, and remote areas.

**Session 2: Case studies and examples of Digital Transformation for Achieving the SDGs**
Moderator: Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCAP

10. Mr. Duncan Macintosh, CEO and Executive Director, APNIC Foundation delivered a presentation on “increasing investment in internet development in the Asia-Pacific”. He stressed the need to increase investment in internet development in the region through education and training, human capacity building, community development, and research. He presented APNIC’s program called Information Society Innovation Fund (ISIF) Asia, which was awarded as WSIS Prizes Champions in 2018 and 2019 for Action Line 11. International and Regional Cooperation. He elaborated that ISIF Asia aimed to empower communities in the Asia-Pacific region to research, design and implement Internet-based solution for their own needs, emphasizing the positive role the Internet has in social and economic development in the region. The meeting noted that ISIF Asia has championed the establishment of alliances and funding partnerships.

11. Mr. Sebastien Codeville, CEO, KaiOS, presented the barriers that highlighted the digital divide in Asia, which include: (i) affordability; (ii) accessibility; (iii) relevance, and (iv) usefulness. Through these factors, KaiOS provided enabling affordable phones and data to make access and usage of mobile internet a reality for all. He shared a case study of KaiOS smartphone, JioPhone that showcasing the success and positive impact in India. Through this smart feature phone powered by KaiOS, India is now in the top two mobile data usage worldwide. He welcomed participants to build partnerships in bringing internet to everyone.

12. Mr. Md Shahid Uddin Akbar, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) presented the e-Krishok project, which was awarded as WSIS Prizes Champion in 2017 for Action Line C7: E-agriculture. He also introduced other initiative project, B-Lab, a rural innovation lab that focusing on accelerating rural economy through youth and ICT. He explained that B-Lab is the leading platform for rural youth to nurture their innovation, enthusiasm and potential as entrepreneur, in particular in agriculture sector.

13. Ms. Sabine Henning, Chief, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP delivered her presentation that focused on older persons and ICTs. She presented statistics that show rapid population ageing in many countries. She also covered a case study in Viet Nam that implemented ICTs for older persons by creating text message
library to provide basic knowledge about diabetes, advice on diet, treatment, regular check-ups, and reminder. The meeting noted that the WSIS Forum 2020 will feature special track on Older Persons and ICTs.

14. Mr. Ashish Narayan, Programme Coordinator, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific presented the overview of ITU and WSIS’ work in digital transformation to achieve SDGs. He underlined that digital transformation requires an ecosystem approach. He informed the meeting on regional priorities, which include (i) addressing special needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Landlocked Developed Countries (LLDCs); (ii) digital economy and inclusive digital society; (iii) digital infrastructure; (iv) policy & regulation; (v) security & resilience. He continued by presenting ITU’s initiatives and activities in the region that highlighted these priorities.

15. Ms. Jonghwi Park, Programme Specialist in ICT in Education, UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Bureau for Education shared the work of UNESCO in achieving SDG Goal 4: Quality Education. She shared information on Digital Kids Asia-Pacific (DKAP) Framework that guides children’s digital citizenship interventions by providing a holistic, rights-based and child-centred approach structured across 5 domains and 16 competencies. The meeting noted the 5 digital citizenship domains, which are: (1) Digital Literacy, (2) Digital Safety and Resilience, (3) Digital Participation and Agency, (4) Digital Emotional Intelligence, and (5) Digital Creativity and Innovation. It was presented through findings on several countries in the region that the current educational intervention of children’s digital issues may overly focus on safety issues instead of creativity and innovation.

16. In response to the presentations by speakers, the following points were raised during the discussion session:

   - The issue of big data in the region.
   - The low result of digital citizenship competencies on creativity and innovation.

17. In his closing remarks, Mr. Malcolm Johnson expressed his appreciation for the constructive and fruitful discussions and the active contribution by all speakers and participation during the Meeting. He thanked ESCAP for the longstanding partnership and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.