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A FRAMEWORK FOR Information and Communications Technology Policy Reviews

Helping Countries Leverage ICT for Development

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PREFACE

Recognizing the growing importance of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to economic and social development, many Governments have elaborated comprehensive, forward-looking and sustainable national ICT strategies. Regular reviews of ICT policy plans, involving different stakeholders, are important. At the same time, assessing the impact of policy measures and sector-specific interventions is a challenging task.

Many developing countries have not yet defined, as part of their ICT plans, mechanisms for ongoing policy review, assessment and monitoring to ensure that evolving ICT strategies are consistent with their development goals and to maximize the positive contributions of investment in ICT. Understanding past developments is important in formulating new and targeted policy proposals that can support and accelerate ICT penetration within Government, businesses and the society at large.

To assist government officials in realizing this process, this publication builds on UNCTAD's longstanding work on ICT policies and on ICT measurement for economic development and trade. It identifies key challenges and solutions in relation to the strategic review of ICT policy plans including leadership, implementation mechanisms, monitoring and review, coordination, institutional framework and the roles of each stakeholder. The publication proposes a model policy review framework and presents a pragmatic toolbox for government policymakers. The core aim of the ICT Policy Reviews (ICTPRs) is to assess the implementation of national ICT strategies by examining how ICT and e-business development issues have been operationalized in development strategies and to identify policies, programmes and implementation mechanisms favouring the development of the information economy.

UNCTAD carried out its first ICTPR from 2009 to 2010 at the request of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) of Egypt. This publication seeks to explain how other Governments could benefit by undertaking a similar exercise. Several Governments of developing countries have expressed their interest in benefiting from UNCTAD assistance in this area. This publication intends to provide them with guidance on carrying out such reviews.

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INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF AN ICTPR

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly widespread in the world and are fast becoming the basis of economic development. The international community early on recognized their potential benefits and encouraged Governments "to elaborate, as appropriate, comprehensive, forward-looking and sustainable national e-strategies, including ICT strategies and sectoral e-strategies as appropriate, as an integral part of national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, as soon as possible and before 2010". A large number of developing countries have put in place one or several national ICT plans or are in the process of incorporating relevant policies and strategies into their national development plans.

While the key elements of an integrated national ICT policy framework are now well known, their implementation at country level is still often inadequate. This partly reflects the absence of a coordinated national response and regular review of their effectiveness. Yet, beyond the recognition of the positive impact of ICT on economic growth and the definition of ICT strategies, consideration needs to be given to how ICTs can be effectively used by Governments and enterprises to foster economic growth and other relevant objectives.

Regular reviews of ICT policy plans, involving different stakeholders, are important in that context. Failure to take early steps to monitor the implementation of ICT policy measures can delay ICT development and restrict future policy measures. Many developing countries have not yet reviews (ICTPRs) is to assess the implementation of national ICT master plans by examining how ICT and e-business development issues have been operationalized in country development strategies and to identify policies, programmes and implementation mechanisms favouring the development of the information economy.

The ICTPR model framework focuses on the assessment of three main components (figure 1):

- The general economic environment and ICT diffusion (the ICT environment);
- Key policy components of the national ICT master plan and their implementation (the ICT policy framework);
- The institutional framework, implementation mechanisms and the roles of the relevant stakeholders (the implementation and institutional framework.

By undertaking an ICTPR, policymakers are able to:

- Quantify the main achievements regarding the implementation of ICT policy measures as foreseen in the national ICT plan(s);
- Identify critical success factors, best practices and conditions, as well as reasons for failure to be able to adjust and reform ICT policies;
- Compare and contrast achievements and successes and failures with other jurisdictions;
- Formulate new and targeted policy decisions to support and accelerate ICT penetration with Government, businesses and the society.

B. OBJECTIVE AND CONTENT OF THE FRAMEWORK

This publication provides a generic framework, based on the model framework developed by

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