

Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times





IDFORMATION ECONOMY REPORT 2009

Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times



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Within the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, the ICT Analysis Section carries out policy-oriented analytical work on the development implications of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It is responsible for the preparation of the *Information Economy Report*. The ICT Analysis Section promotes international dialogue on issues related to ICTs for development and contributes to building developing countries' capacities to measure the information economy, as well as to design and implement relevant policies and legal frameworks.

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PREFACE

The speed at which information and communication technologies (ICTs) have diffused around the world has vastly exceeded the expectations voiced at the World Summit on the Information Society gatherings in 2003 and 2005. More than half the world's people now have access to such technologies, and especially to mobile telephones. Moreover, mobile applications have become more than just tools for talking. Some least developed countries are pioneering new forms of mobile usage, for example to access information and to facilitate banking transactions and trade.

As documented in the *Information Economy Report 2009: Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times*, however, there is still a long way to go before we can claim to have significantly narrowed the "digital divide" to achieve an information society for all. Wide gaps in ICT infrastructure remain, not least in the case of broadband networks. As also demonstrated by the United Nations E-government Survey, human capacities to manage the information economy are also uneven across countries.

This report focuses on the implications of the global economic crisis on ICT. The picture that emerges is one of great contrasts. Some parts of the industry have been seriously affected, with dramatic declines in trade and employment. At the same time, investments in telecommunications and trade in ICT-enabled services appear to be among the most resilient areas of the global economy; only one major telecommunications firm has gone bankrupt in this downturn. I encourage Governments and companies to do more in exploring how ICTs can support the path to recovery, promote effective governance and advance sustainable development.

This *Information Economy Report 2009* looks at the progress that has been made and discusses different options for countries hoping to seize the opportunities created by new technologies. Its information and analysis should prove valuable to policymakers and all others engaged in navigating our societies and economies in this turbulent global economic environment.

BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General

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