Asia-Pacific Interagency Working Group on Information Communications Technology

Report of the
Side Event of the
**Asia-Pacific Forum for
Sustainable Development**
on

ICT for Transformation and Resilience

30 March 2018

Acknowledgement |

The opinions, figures and estimates set forth in these papers are the responsibility of the authors and should not necessarily be considered as reflecting the views or carrying the endorsement of the United Nations.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APFSD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
AP-IS	Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway
APNIC	Asia-Pacific Network Information Centre
APT	Asia-Pacific Telecommunity
CICTSTI	Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation
EMIS	Education Management Information System (EMIS)
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GA	General Assembly
GCI	Global Cybersecurity Index
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
REC	Reaching Every Community
SDG	United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SSC	Smart Sustainable Cites
SSDM	Smart Sustainable Development Model Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer Programme
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WTDCs	World Telecommunication Development Conferences
WTSAs	World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly

Preface

In the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, frontier technologies are transforming not only our daily lives but also the planet`s development tragectory. The revolution is driven by innovations in artificial intelligence, automation, blockchain and other cutting edge technologies. This calls for greater urgency in bridging the staggering digital divide in the Asia Pacific region that is exacerbated when countries at the forefront of the Fourth Industrial Revolution quickly leave behind those that are slow at technology uptake. The Sustainable Development Goals mandate that we must do our best to reduce increasing inequalities and ensure that "no one is left behind" in these times of opportunity and challenge.

Furthermore, enhancing broadband connectivity at the national, regional and global levels contributes to the social, economic and environmental aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, target 9.1 (Develop quality reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all) and 9.c (Significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020). Importantly, under Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education, one target requires member States to expand educational opportunities in ICT. In gender equality, Sustainable Development Goal 5 includes one target of "Enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women". Another target under Sustainable Development Goal 17 further specifies the role of ICT as a means of implementation. In response, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convenes the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) on a yearly basis, as a unique regional platform for dialogue between ESCAP member states and other stakeholders on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

Earlier this year, the meeting of the Regional Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was organized in Bangkok to explore ways to collaborate and create synergies among UN agencies implementing ICT for development initiatives in Asia and the Pacific. The participating agencies decided to join forces and advocate for the transformative capabilities of ICT at an inter-agency side event and joint exhibition during the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) on 30 March 2018. Those collaborative efforts demonstrated how the expertise of respective agencies contribute to the achievement of SDGs through the systematic and strategic use of

ICT and digital technologies.

This report showcases participating agencies' initiatives to collectively strive for e-resilience and societal transformation. The goal of organizing such knowledge sharing events is to exchange lessons learned and good practices as well as develop efficient and transformative ICT projects that will realize a society where "no one is left behind". Under this collaborative spirit, ESCAP, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) have contributed to the APFSD side event and this report by showcasing solutions to promote resilience and transformation. As such, each agency's work is highlighted as follows:

ESCAP serves as the United Nations' regional hub in promoting regional cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division is focused on promoting inclusive regional broadband connectivity and e-resilience through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative.

ITU as the United Nations specialized agency for ICT, is currently working on promoting the partnership initiatives with the World Health Organization (WHO) on e-health and m-health and with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on e-agriculture. Other initiatives ITU is working on include e-governance, digital financial services and inclusion.

APT is an inter-governmental organization in the Asia-Pacific region dedicated to the development of telecommunication and ICT for its members, and coordination of a regional voice for the Asia-Pacific region at global events. Current strategic focus is on connectivity, innovation, trust, capacity building and partnership.

UNESCO is the specialized agency entrusted with the Education 2030 Agenda in the Asia Pacific region. It is focused on promoting ICT integration in education through coherent and comprehensive national policies, learning and teaching opportunities, and using ICT for mobile literacy through safe and effective use of technology.

The UNV program helps co-create, design and tailor specific volunteer modalities both on site and online, to strengthen the peacebuilding and development capacities of the United Nations and Member States.

In order to ensure that the work of UN agencies and partners is effective, synergistic and impactful, forums such as the IAWG enable discussions on the positive impact of such endeavors and allow reflection on the achievements of the work by the ICT community. Further details about the scope and breadth of work by each agency can be found in the following pages.

Chapter I
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

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Introduction of Organization

ESCAP serves as the United Nations' regional hub and promotes regional cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 Member States and 9 Associate Members, ESCAP has emerged as a regional think-tank offering countries sound analytical products that shed insight into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region. The Commission's strategic focus is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which it does by reinforcing and deepening regional cooperation and integration to advance connectivity, financial cooperation and market integration. ESCAP's research and analysis coupled with its policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to governments aims to support countries' sustainable and inclusive development ambitions.

Information and communications technology (ICT) can serve as a meta infrastructure and at the same time a development enabler for socio-economic development. ICT-enabled financial, transport and trade facilitation infrastructure and services encourage innovations and provide a basis for the digital economy's potential to transform societies of Asia and the Pacific. Broadband-enabled technologies, such as emerging applications of artificial intelligence, increase efficiencies that drive growth in various sectors of the economy. It also helps support climate change adaptation, agricultural productivity and disaster risk reduction,

while delivering education and health services in remote and rural areas. However, these ICT-enabled systems are only effective if all citizens have affordable broadband access to such innovative technologies.

ESCAP member States have clearly recognized the strategic significance of ICT connectivity in deepening regional economic cooperation and integration and the achievement of the SDGs. The regional road map[1] for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was endorsed by ESCAP member States in 2017. The road map recognized that while broadband Internet access had improved within the region, the digital divide continued to widen between and within member States. The widening digital divide risks some ESCAP member States to be left behind from the socio-economic opportunities created by broadband connectivity. Specifically, the regional road map recognized the opportunity for regional cooperation in ICT through the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative[2].

The AP-IS initiative

Subsequently, the 73rd session of the ESCAP Commission in May 2017 adopted resolution 73/6 on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) through regional cooperation. The resolution invited members and associate members to cooperate in the implementation of the AP-IS Master Plan[3] and Regional Cooperation Framework Document[4] as endorsed by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation at its first session in October 2016.[5]

The objective of the AP-IS initiative is to increase the availability and affordability of broadband connectivity across Asia and the Pacific and to strengthen the underlying Internet infrastructure in the region through four pillars: (1) physical infrastructure development; (2) Internet traffic and network management; (3) promoting e-resilience and (4) broadband for all.

The ESCAP secretariat organized the first meeting of the Working Group on the AP-IS in Incheon, Republic of Korea[6], in 2015, and the second

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