

Almaty Declaration

On

Strengthening Central Asia Connectivity through Enhanced Telecommunications Infrastructure

We, the representatives of the Governments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Pakistan, assembled in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 3 June 2014, for the High-level Regional Roundtable on Telecommunications Connectivity in Central Asia, within the framework of the Asian Information Superhighway (AISH) initiative,

I. Preamble

Recognizing the growing role of Central Asia in global telecommunications networks, including its position as a key Internet transit link between Asia and Europe,

Emphasizing the importance of improving connectivity and telecommunications transit routes in the Trans-Eurasian region, including terrestrial and seabed connections,

Acknowledging the importance of information and communications technology as a meta-infrastructure that enhances efficiencies across all infrastructures, increases economy-wide productivity, and global competitiveness of countries in Central Asia,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/298 “Developing cooperation for better connectivity and telecommunications transit routes in the Trans-Eurasian region”, in which the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan proposed the establishment of a Eurasian Connectivity Alliance,

Recalling Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific resolution 69/10 on promoting regional connectivity and building knowledge-networked societies in Asia and the Pacific, in which members and associate members agreed to implement information and communications technology policies that promote social and economic development,

Reaffirming the declaration by Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that it is essential to work towards improved access to information and communications technology, especially broadband network and services, and bridge the digital divide to facilitate the flow of information between governments and the public,

Expressing concern in this regard that there is limited development of Internet backbone and cross-border connectivity in the region and that less than 8 per cent of the population in Central Asia has access to broadband Internet that is high-speed, reliable and affordable,

Emphasizing the need to enhance regional and international connectivity across Central Asia, including through development of competitive telecommunications markets, investments in information and communications technology infrastructure, and improvements in international telecommunications connectivity;

Recognizing that improved telecommunications connectivity across Central Asia will create new links with regional and global knowledge hubs, and offer potential revenue-earning opportunities for international, regional, and domestic telecommunications operators,

Recognizing the importance of enabling environments to promote competition and enable private investment in the development, deployment and operation of information and communications technology infrastructure, as well as the associated services and content, for the achievement of reliable, affordable and universal access to and use of information and communications technology,

Noting the need to create the enabling environment for private investment and to increase the availability of and access to financing for information and communications technology projects in Central Asia, especially those that link least developed and landlocked developing countries with each other, and with other economies in Asia and the Pacific,

Recognizing the benefits of coordinating the planning and deployment of infrastructure across the information and communications technology, transport, and energy sectors, including increased construction efficiency, improved service reliability, and enhanced financial, environmental, and operational sustainability,

Further recognizing seamless regional connectivity in land transport offered by the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway agreements, as well as the opportunity for promoting cross-sectoral infrastructure planning,

Welcoming the ongoing partnership between the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the World Bank Group on enhancing connectivity in Central Asia through policy analysis and technical assistance,

II. Policy directions

Resolve to work together, including through existing and planned global, regional and national partnerships, to bring reliable and affordable broadband Internet services to all people in Central Asia;

Resolve to prioritize promotion of market competition, and open-access and non-discriminatory pricing in the development of regional telecommunications infrastructure, and to collaborate with international, regional, and domestic carriers to improve international telecommunications connectivity;

Resolve to leverage existing regional connectivity opportunities offered by the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway, in order to utilize the right-of-way of existing transport networks, and achieve rapid, cost-effective deployment of optical fiber across and within countries;

Agree to exchange information and knowledge, best practices, and regional experiences related to the policies and programs to promote information and communications technology sector development;

Agree to identify measures to develop international telecommunications connectivity in Central Asia through a mix of policy and regulatory reforms and partnerships, with a view towards developing competitive markets and creating open-access networks;

Agree to propose to the ESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology and Committee on Transport at their fourth sessions, respectively that, through its relevant working groups, ESCAP's intergovernmental agreements make provisions for the synchronized deployment of infrastructure along transport networks;

Further agree to support at the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology, in October 2014, the establishment of a working group on enhancing international telecommunications connectivity in Central Asia;

Decide to submit a proposal for discussion with the World Bank Group and related international finance institutions, on developing the institutional capacity, policy and regulatory frameworks, and as needed, the telecommunications infrastructure required to support the development of international connectivity across Central Asia;

Take note of the proposal by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the establishment of a Eurasian Connectivity Alliance aimed at highlighting synergies among Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international development institutions towards improving the development of regional telecommunications transit routes;

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