

Opening Address

by

H.E. Group Captain Anudith Nakornthap

**Minister of Information and Communication Technology,
Thailand**

at

**The Third Session of
The Committee on Information and Communications
Technology**

20 November 2012

13:00 hours

**United Nations Conference Centre,
Meeting Room 3**

Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

His Excellency Louis Napoleon Corpuz Casambre, Under Secretary, Information and Communications Technology Office – Department of Science and Technology, Republic of the Philippines

His Excellency Air Chief Marshal Thares Punsri, Chairman of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be invited by ESCAP to give an opening address at this “Third Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology.”

The economic and social impact of ICT is profound. From relatively simple applications that bring the security and efficiency of mobile banking to rural farmers, to vast cloud storage networks that store millions of gigabits of information, the transformative power of ICT is reaching all corners of the Asian and Pacific region.

This meeting provides a unique platform for bringing together leading policy-makers from ICT ministries from across the region to discuss the pressing ICT issues of our time, and to address the challenges in bringing these cutting edge technologies to all. Despite the innovative digital opportunities unleashed by the ICT revolution, the Asia-Pacific region remains hampered by a growing digital divide that is most prominent in fixed and mobile broadband Internet. In some areas of the region, underinvestment in ICT infrastructure has resulted in a lack of seamless and efficient regional ICT networks. This leads to disparities in Internet access speeds and divergent broadband user costs that have resulted in Asia-Pacific where is home to both the most and least digitally advanced countries of the world.

Realizing a prosperous and sustainable future for Asia-Pacific will therefore depend upon the ability of the region to harness the benefits of regional economic integration. In the Asian and Pacific region, as in other regions of the world, ICTs have brought innovative digital opportunities that are accelerating this process, however, more must be done to ensure that growth is driven by region-centric processes and that the benefits of ICT-fuelled growth are shared by all.

I am pleased to see that as regional integration accelerates, there are encouraging signs that policymakers are increasingly focused on setting the right regulatory and policy environment to address connectivity gaps, and develop regional ICT infrastructure. Seamless trans-border connectivity across our continent will require huge investments in ICT network infrastructure, that will eventually see super information highways crisscrossing our vast landmass, turning our land- and sea-locked countries into connected transporters and traders of the new cargo of knowledge societies: ideas and innovations. The potential for further enhancing ICT infrastructure connectivity in the region is enormous, and collaboration between governments as well as between the public and private sectors should be prioritized. Developing robust land- and sea-based fibre-optic networks will increase the affordability of international bandwidth, and doing so will require a regional effort to develop a seamless regional information space commensurate with the region's rising global influence.

Today, we also recognize the importance of reliable and comprehensive data and indicators that accurately reflect the current landscape of ICT development, and particularly its outreach to rural and underdeveloped regions. This information will aid ICT ministries and policymakers in education, health and business as they identify the contribution of ICT in these sectors and look at innovative new ways to further economic and social progress. I am pleased to inform you that in September 2012, Thailand has hosted the 10th World Telecommunication / ICT Indicators meeting, underscoring our commitment to furthering our understanding of the information society and bringing the benefits of ICT to all people of the Asian and Pacific region.

In this spirit, Thailand is looking forward to sharing with you our experiences and best practice as well as perspectives in the aforementioned issues. Finally, I wish you a very fruitful outcome of this meeting and a pleasant stay in Bangkok, Thailand.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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