
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Information and Communications Technology

Second session

Bangkok, 24-26 November 2010

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Regional cooperation on information and
communications technology for development and
disaster risk reduction**

**Background information on the VIP Forum on
Information and Communications Technology for
Development and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Information note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. Asia and the Pacific as a region has been experiencing drastic changes in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) in the last few years, fuelled by the rapid development of mobile and broadband networks as well as an increasing variety of applications which are run on the networks. The expansion of networks and new capabilities present opportunities and challenges. As highlighted in document E/ESCAP/CICT(2)/2, various subregions and groups of countries with similar income levels have demonstrated significantly varied growth patterns and rates of mobile, broadband and Internet subscriptions. For instance, between 2005 and 2009, a significant increase in the number of broadband and mobile subscribers and accelerated growth rates of subscriptions were observed among the landlocked developing countries, in general, and in Central Asia, in particular, while Pacific island developing economies showed one of the lowest growth rates across various means of access.

2. These new dynamic developments are taking place as ESCAP member countries fully recover from the economic crisis and shift their focus back to achieving various internationally agreed development goals, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In their efforts to sustain economic growth and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, ESCAP member countries may wish to take full advantage of expanding broadband and mobile capabilities.

II. Focus of the Forum

3. An inclusive and sustainable information society requires the steady growth of access to ICT and the expansion of its use through applications.

Under agenda items 4 and 5 of the second session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, more specific discussions on the development of broadband networks and mobile applications will take place, with panellists being asked to share their views on the challenges and opportunities inherent in further expanding inclusive access through the development of broadband networks and enhancing ICT usage through the promotion of mobile applications.

4. In the process of expanding ICT access and increasing its usage, one of the recurrent questions that arises is how those in the region can work together to deliver the benefits of emerging technologies for economic development, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, and effective disaster risk reduction efforts. Asia and the Pacific as a whole is endowed with the financial, technological and human resources needed to address major socio-economic challenges and build an inclusive information society. These resources are not, however, channelled through effective and meaningful regional cooperation. One area for such cooperation could be intra-subregional broadband networks which could connect submarine cable and satellite landing points to inland areas and neighbouring countries. Another opportunity could be found in the interoperability of applications and the development of a common application which could be used across national borders.

5. Against this backdrop, the Forum will invite leading experts and key decision makers and policymakers on ICT for development and disaster risk reduction in the region to share their insights and perspectives on challenges, opportunities and emerging trends with a view to promoting regional cooperation. Would the region benefit from strengthened subregional cooperation based on differential growth patterns and rates, in particular among the Pacific countries? What should the emerging equilibrium be between public sector initiatives and private sector investment? Would there be scope for regional cooperation to encourage private sector investment in broadband and mobile application development? Based on previous discussions, this Forum will seek to build high-level consensus on the way forward for the region to accelerate inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development.

III. Format of the Forum

- An introductory presentation will be made by the ESCAP secretariat (5 minutes), followed by the keynote speaker (15 minutes).
- The discussion will be moderated by a distinguished leading expert on the subject.
- The Forum will take place in a round-table format.
- Discussants will have 10-15 minutes each to make comments or presentations about their views and experience, and to make recommendations and suggestions on regional cooperation and the way forward.
- The floor will be open for questions and answers addressed to the keynote speaker and the discussants.
- The moderator will briefly summarize the session.

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