

**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**Expert Group Meeting on Emerging ICT Developments and Opportunities for  
Enhancing Cooperation for Regional Connectivity**  
22-24 November 2010  
Bangkok, Thailand

## **OUTLINE**

### **Background**

Access to connectivity is the Asia-Pacific peoples' passport to the global information society and its transformation into a knowledge economy. A key tool for this is the adoption and use of broadband technology, which today is very unevenly distributed and threatens to become the new digital divide. At the end of 2009, countries in North America and the European Union accounted for more than 50 percent of the world's 1 billion fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions, while South Asia, for example, accounted for less than 2 percent. However, with almost 75% of new subscriptions in developing countries, the experience with the rapid diffusion of mobile telephony shows the potential for growth in the ICT sector, as well as the potential for promising innovations that will bring huge social and economic development gains. Enabling policies, including those that promote regional cooperation are key, particularly in light of ever advancing technologies, the myriad applications and services that are constantly evolving and more importantly the opportunities they open up for new forms of regional cooperation that were not thought possible in the past.

Against this background, in 2009, the ESCAP secretariat undertook a detailed regional overview on ICT connectivity, examining in particular, the emerging technologies and their policy and regulatory implications. One of the noticeable developments is the continued proliferation of mobile telephony and consequently its dominance in regional ICT developments. Furthermore, some subregions, notably Central Asia and landlocked developing countries experienced rapid growth of broadband networks. It should be noted however, that broadband availability is among the lowest in these subregions and consequently, rapid growth was at least in part due to the low base from which growth took place. Conversely, high income countries showed slow growth on mobile, Internet and broadband subscribers, demonstrating the saturation of markets, while Pacific developing countries continue to show slow growth patterns and low penetration rates.

The Secretariat also examined how to take advantage of expanding mobile capabilities in achieving universal ICT access and what could be the most efficient combination of private and public initiatives, including ICT policy and regulatory updates. Among the key findings was that such a combination of effective policy and regulatory instruments and private sector initiatives can not be discussed without taking into account applications, content and information which are made available on these new networks and devices. The

usage further prompts expansion of ICT connectivity and access and in turn further policy developments.

### **Objectives of EGM**

Against this background, this meeting has the following objectives:

1) review the latest regional developments on ICT connectivity, 2) review ICT regulations and 3) consider policies to capitalize on emerging ICT applications in key socio-economic sectors 4) identify areas in which regional cooperation can strengthen ICT4development

Experts at the meeting will exchange ideas and share good practices and strategies for expanding ICT connectivity and introducing new ICT applications. In addition to the review on emerging technical trends, the meeting will discuss a framework for possible regional cooperation. With the steady expansion of broadband networks and uptake of cloud computing among developing countries, exciting new opportunities for regional cooperation are emerging as sharing applications, resources and content become more practical, and cost efficient.

The EGM is also expected to review and contribute to the development of a framework for regional cooperation for the Asia-Pacific Gateway on Disaster Risk Reduction and Development and discuss how member countries and international organizations can improve regional cooperation systematically in the area of ICT for disaster risk reduction.

### **Modality of the EGM**

The EGM will start with an opening session in which the background of this project and findings from the previous activities will be presented.

The following session on country presentations will share good concrete practices and policies which aim to take advantage of emerging technologies and address the question on how to expand broadband to rural areas and schools, as per the World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) targets.

In the session on mobile applications, ESCAP will present the results of its studies on some of the essential mobile services to socio-economic development among ESCAP member countries, such as m-banking, m-health and m-government.

The session will be followed by discussions on policy options and recommendations for implementation at the national level, together with a concerted strategy for possible regional cooperation and frameworks.

The discussion outcomes will be presented to the second session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) from 24 to 26 November 2010.

**Target group:** Government ICT policy and decision makers

### **Venue and Date**

The EGM is scheduled from 22 to 24 November 2010 at UNCC, in Bangkok.

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