



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Information and Communications Technology

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**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY  
ON ITS FIRST SESSION**

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## I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

1. The Committee recommended that the members and associate members of the Commission strengthen cooperation in the development and application of information and communications technology (ICT), including space-based techniques and applications, to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the development goals established by major world summits, such as the World Summit on the Information Society and the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and to meet the economic, social and technological challenges confronting the region.

2. The Committee recommended that the secretariat prioritize its activities related to facilitating the development of multi-purpose community e-centres. Those activities, carried out within existing resources, could include in-depth and focused research and analysis on policy options and recommendations to ensure the sustainability and scalability of e-centres. There would be a focus on the rural areas of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

3. The Committee recommended that the secretariat prioritize its activities, carried out within existing resources, related to enhancing Pacific connectivity for improved ICT access by unconnected and underserved people. Those activities could include a study on viable options for deploying satellite technologies to geographically challenged countries in the region, particularly Pacific island developing countries.

4. The Committee called upon the secretariat to further its initiatives in human resources and capacity-building as regards ICT policy development and applications, especially for countries with special needs, in the areas of ICT indicators, e-readiness, information security management, and such applications as e-commerce/e-business, e-government, e-tourism, e-health, e-literacy and e-agriculture. The Committee recommended that the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), in particular, play an important role in assisting member countries in addressing those needs and shortcomings.

5. The Committee recommended that the secretariat, taking into account the work of other regional commissions and keeping within existing resources, put in place follow-up mechanisms at the regional level to review the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society<sup>1</sup> in 2015 and streamline the implementation of the Regional Action Plan towards the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>2</sup> in cooperation with appropriate international/regional organizations, including the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific and other stakeholders.

6. The Committee recommended that the secretariat make further efforts in inter-agency cooperation and in building regional cooperation on ICT for development, and make greater efforts in promoting public-private partnerships,

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<sup>1</sup> The Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action (A/C.2/59/3, annex) and the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda (see A/60/687).

<sup>2</sup> ST/ESCAP/2415.

where appropriate, while recognizing that the private sector is a main driver of ICT adoption and diffusion.

7. The Committee recommended that the secretariat carry out more research on the importance of ICT for food security and sustainable agriculture, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other international organizations, and disseminate relevant good practices to developing countries of the region. The Committee also recommended that lessons from failures also be analysed with a view to helping members and associate members to avoid such situations. The Committee recommended that the secretariat cooperate with other relevant international organizations, particularly FAO, to initiate a survey of online networks of agricultural expert systems within the region, focusing on aspects such as establishment, maintenance and contents, and assist in establishing online networks of agricultural expert systems in countries where such systems are not yet established.

8. The Committee recommended that the secretariat consider organizing specific training courses on new agriculture technologies, such as precision farming, farm automation and bioinformatics, in order to raise awareness in the region, especially in developing countries, and to include the Pacific island developing countries as partners, venues, and target audiences for such activities.

9. The Committee recommended that, in the implementation of the strategic framework and proposed outputs of the proposed programme of work for 2010-2011,<sup>3</sup> greater consideration be given to countries with special needs, especially in institutional capacity-building and human resources development in ICT and disaster risk reduction.

10. The Committee recommended that the secretariat promote the sharing of information, communications and space infrastructure and resources by strengthening existing regional cooperative mechanisms and using specialized facilities and knowledge to improve the disaster preparedness and response of all interested members and associate members.

11. The Committee recommended that the secretariat explore possibilities for developing regional and subregional disaster-communication standby systems by members and associate members and alternative means for developing a regional emergency communications system in synergy with the International Telecommunication Union, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity and relevant stakeholders.

12. The Committee recommended that the secretariat consider leveraging existing ICT-enabled infrastructure networks, such as telecentres, to be used effectively for disaster risk reduction and emerging issues, such as food security.

13. The Committee recommended that the secretariat conduct a study on how ICT applications could play a greater role in disaster risk reduction.

14. The Committee recommended that the secretariat continue to support regional cooperation through, among other things, APCICT and the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development networks in cooperation with relevant organizations, in order to build the capacities of member countries at the policy, institutional and technical levels in the use of ICT for disaster risk reduction.

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<sup>3</sup> E/ESCAP/CICT/5.

15. Recognizing the need for a regional network of disaster information sharing networks, which would address multi-hazards, the Committee recommended that the secretariat promote such a network on information sharing and analysis for disaster risk reduction in collaboration with other international and regional partners working in that field.
16. The Committee recommended that, in addition to its current work programme, APCICT strengthen the research and analysis component on ICT and disaster risk reduction in order to assist member States with policy options and recommendations.
17. The Committee also recommended that APCICT develop a new module on ICT for disaster risk reduction for its programme “Academy of ICT for Government leaders” and that it conduct training for Government leaders and targeted stakeholders.
18. Considering the relevance of the mandate of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) to the subprogramme on information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction, the Committee recommended that APCTT continue its contribution to that work programme for the biennium 2010-2011 and thereafter.
19. The Committee recommended that APCTT assist Pacific island developing countries in the development of their capacity on technology transfer.

## II. PROCEEDINGS

### A. World Summit on the Information Society five years on: information and communications technology for inclusive development

20. The Committee had before it the document entitled “World Summit on the Information Society five years on: information and communications technology for inclusive development” (E/ESCAP/CICT/1), which addressed some key challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific region in developing an inclusive and development-oriented information society, as envisioned in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society.<sup>4</sup>
21. Several delegations recognized information and communications technology (ICT) as a fundamental enabler of socio-economic development and described their national ICT strategies, plans and programmes, and their recent achievements in formulating enabling policies, implementing national ICT strategies and relevant plans and programmes, providing ICT connectivity to underserved areas, making access to information networks affordable, and utilizing ICT applications to stimulate economic and social development and the growth of the ICT sector.
22. Several delegations emphasized the importance of implementing the recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society and reviewing progress in the Asia-Pacific region. Some delegations emphasized that the implementation of related activities should be done in close coordination with other United Nations organizations and civil society.
23. Several delegations encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts (a) to bridge the digital divide between nations and within communities, and (b) to support the capacity-building efforts of developing countries, especially least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in the

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<sup>4</sup> The Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action (A/C.2/59/3, annex) and the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda (see A/60/687).

area of ICT policy and applications, including the establishment of community e-centres.

24. Several delegations expressed concern that, despite various efforts at the national and regional levels, there was still a large digital divide between developed and developing countries, and between urban and rural populations. In that regard, the current level of ICT access, especially in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, might not be sufficient to achieve the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society or the Millennium Development Goals.

25. Several delegations expressed concern that, despite reports of success with community e-centres in many countries of region, there were still several challenges to understand and overcome, including the problems of sustainability and scalability, especially for centres located in remote and rural areas. One representative noted that member States should keep in mind the long-term funding requirements to sustain the community e-centres being implemented as well as those already in existence.

26. Several delegations recognized the critical importance of promoting the exchange of information and best practices at the regional level, of facilitating policy debate on the use of ICT for development, and of promoting cooperation among all stakeholders in collectively transforming the digital divide into digital opportunities and bringing the benefits of ICT to all. Asia-Pacific regional cooperation could focus on maximizing connectivity and ICT access at the national level as well as the use of such resources as e-education, e-health, e-agriculture and e-business applications so that all countries in the region might benefit economically and socially from those technological advances.

27. Several delegations emphasized the importance of human resources development activities in fostering ICT applications for development in such areas as policy, e-commerce, e-government, e-health and e-agriculture. Those delegations also recognized the opportunity for cooperation with the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT). The delegations also recognized the value of knowledge sharing among member States. Some delegations offered to share their country experiences and knowledge on various issues related to community e-centres and other aspects of information and communications technology for development.

28. Several delegations encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts to expand Pacific connectivity, especially an in-depth study on financing mechanisms and options for deploying satellite technologies.

29. One delegation informed the Committee of its view that the private sector should play a leading role in the development and application of ICT. The delegation also mentioned that its Government provided developing countries with development assistance in fields where the private sector encountered difficulties, such as infrastructure development and capacity-building. The delegation requested that the Committee take care to avoid duplicating the work of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity. Another delegation expressed the view that the secretariat should pay more attention to public-private partnerships, which might attract considerable investment to the ICT sector.

30. One delegation, while expressing satisfaction with the secretariat's timely provision of most Committee documents, noticed two exceptions. The delegation indicated that it would be expedient for the secretariat to focus its future activities on the goals stated in the Commission resolution 64/1 and expressed the view that some

practical aspects of ICT development, such as investment promotion, were not sufficiently reflected in the Committee documents, including the strategic framework for 2010-2011 (E/ESCAP/CICT/5). The delegation suggested that practical results could be achieved if priority projects could be identified for financing, and if the secretariat could undertake research to identify the ICT development factors that made a positive contribution to different aspects of economic and social development. The delegation held the view that more attention should be given to the quality of the ICT services provided, in particular concerning the issues of ensuring the security of ICT infrastructure and preventing its use to spread the ideology of terrorism and extremism and the propaganda of violence. The delegation accorded importance of tracking the progress of goals related to the World Summit on the Information Society in the region towards using ICT achievement indicators, taking into consideration the experience of the other United Nations agencies, such as United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

31. One delegation expressed a strong interest in documenting best practices and lessons learned regarding the planning, implementation and sustainability of community e-centres.

32. One delegation requested for experience-sharing from field visits to be organized in 2009 on the development of community e-centres either in India or Sri Lanka. The committee noted Sri Lanka's offer to host such activity.

33. The representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic stated that his country wished to make use of ICT in its efforts to tap its abundant hydropower with a view to becoming the "battery" of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and to transform itself from landlocked to land-linked.

34. One delegation reminded the Committee that the activities proposed in the document, if approved, should be carried out within existing resources.

35. The delegation of Azerbaijan stressed the importance of using ICT and leveraging its geographical location in the construction of super information highways between the two large economic groupings of Europe and the Pacific Rim.

36. One delegation requested that the secretariat consider the standards and indicators of ICT for development developed by some intergovernmental organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

37. The Committee also had before it the background information document entitled "Information and communications technology for food security and sustainable agriculture in the knowledge economy" (E/ESCAP/CICT/INF/1).

38. Several delegations commended the secretariat for the quality of the background information and expressed their appreciation of the vital role of ICT in supporting sustainable agriculture and food security.

39. Several delegations noted that ICT played important role in sustainable agriculture and food security by enhancing agricultural productivity. Increased knowledge of food production systems obtained through e-learning and access to data on best practices enabled international, regional and national expertise to trickle down local levels.

40. Several delegations observed that many countries in the region had established online networks, often called agricultural expert systems, at the national,

provincial and community levels. Those networks provided useful information on agricultural production, marketing, technological developments, weather forecasts and disaster management.

41. Several delegations noted that keeping up with to the rapid development of information and communications technology and other cutting-edge technologies was of particular importance to the Asia-Pacific region, where agriculture remained dominant.

42. The delegation of Sri Lanka informed the Committee that its country had addressed the issue of food security within the framework of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

### **B. Information and communications technology-enabled disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific**

43. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Information and communications technology-enabled disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific" (E/ESCAP/CICT/2).

44. Several delegations expressed support for the priority issues described in document E/ESCAP/CICT/2. In addition, several delegations recognized the need for a regional network of all disaster information sharing networks, addressing multi-hazards, and, in that regard, called on the secretariat to promote such a network on information sharing and analysis for disaster risk reduction in collaboration with other international and regional partners working in that field.

45. Some delegations noted that ICT, including space technology, was an important tool for assisting in all phases of disaster risk management, which covered mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters.

46. One delegation noted with appreciation the establishment of both the committees on Information and Communications Technology and on Disaster Risk Reduction. Some delegations welcomed the recent establishment of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of the secretariat.

47. Several delegations noted that, in order to reduce the risk of disasters, regional cooperation was critical, especially for developing countries, which had less capacity to manage the risk of disaster.

48. Some delegations noted that regional cooperative mechanisms must take into account the overall capacity, the technological and institutional infrastructure, the enabling policy environment, and the economic and social disparities among countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

49. One delegation noted with appreciation the work of the secretariat on capacity-building in the use of ICT for disaster management, especially at the institutional and technical levels.

50. One delegation noted that the secretariat, including APCICT and the network established under the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP), could further contribute to building the capacities of member countries at the policy, institutional and technical levels to address the integrated use

of ICT for disaster risk reduction, in cooperation with relevant organizations that have capacity-building programmes.

51. Several delegations reported on national initiatives regarding the use of ICT for disaster risk reduction. The delegation of the Russian Federation shared that country's experience with a Comprehensive National System of Disaster Early Warning. The delegation of Japan informed the Committee of an initiative called the Global Flood Alert System, which used both satellite and ground-based technologies (see <http://gfas.internationalfloodnetwork.org/gfas-web/>). It also informed the Committee that it had organized training workshops for disaster management personnel from developing countries. It then informed the Committee of "Sentinel Asia" (see <http://dmss.tksk.jaxa.jp/sentinel>), an initiative begun in October 2006 which currently benefited from the participation of 20 countries and dozens of institutions and international organizations. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) had launched the Wideband InterNetworking engineering test and Demonstration Satellite (WINDS) and had considered demonstrating the data transition. Japan would continue to contribute to the satellite development of "Sentinel Asia" in cooperation with partners including ESCAP. The delegation of China reported on the country's experience in applying ICT for disaster risk reduction during a severe snowstorm earlier in the year, and the unprecedented earthquake in Sichuan Province in May 2008. The delegation reported its use of a satellite positioning system, un-manned aerial photography, satellite telephony and spatial information systems to support timely and effective responses to such disasters. The delegation of Sri Lanka informed the Committee of its efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>5</sup> since 2006 and of its plan to use telecentres for disaster risk reduction activities.

52. One delegation expressed support for the outputs proposed for the strategic framework for 2010-2011, as contained in document E/ESCAP/CICT/5. The delegation recommended that, in the implementation of those outputs, greater consideration should be given to countries with special needs, especially in institutional capacity-building and human resources development in ICT and disaster risk reduction.

53. One delegation supported the work of the secretariat on follow-up to the implementation of Hyogo Framework for Action, through interactions between the ESCAP secretariat and members of the Commission, and among members themselves, in close cooperation with organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

54. One delegation suggested giving special attention to the application of

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