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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in
2010 to implement the outcome of the WSIS**

Submission by

ESCAP

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 14th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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ESCAP's activities in the implementation and follow-up of the WSIS outcomes

ESCAP's mandate

The Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD) coordinates the activities related to WSIS within ESCAP. ESCAP is mandated by the ESCAP member countries through the ESCAP Commission resolution 62/5 entitled *Building the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific* to assist the countries in ICT capacity building, regional strategy development and implementation, among others.

Committee on Information and Communications Technology

Furthermore, the ESCAP Commission resolution 64/1 created the Committee on Information and Communications Technology with the following objectives:

- Integration of ICT-related issues in development policies, plans and programmes
- Transfer and application of ICT at the regional and subregional levels
- Development of human and institutional capacity in the use of ICT
- ICT applications for disaster risk reduction

Accordingly the first session¹ was held in November 2008 and the second session² in November 2010. Both served as a regional platform to review the progress made by the ESCAP member countries in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, identify gaps and recommend the way forward at the regional level.

Report on WSIS outcome implementation

ESCAP has undertaken research and analysis on the implementation and progress made against the WSIS targets and reported to the CICT sessions. The report entitled "Review of the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific"³ which analyzed the current status of ICT for development in Asia and the Pacific, reviewed the progress made in the implementation of WSIS outcomes and recommendations on the way forward.

In particular, the report highlighted the rapid growth in mobile communications and differential growth of broadband among various subregions in Asia and the Pacific. The rapid expansion of mobile communication was found providing an unparalleled opportunity to extend access to information on socio-economic development in under-serviced remote and rural areas. Based on these emerging trends, the report recommended the ESCAP member countries to focus on the

¹ <http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/cict-2008/>

² <http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/cict-2010/index.asp>

³ http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/cict-2010/CICT2_2E.pdf

development of mobile applications which are relevant to the needs of the poor, such as mobile banking and mobile health. The wider usage of mobile communication was expected to further stimulate the expansion of ICT access and create a virtuous circle. Broadband networks also demonstrated a rapid growth, but the growth patterns varied from one subregion to the other. Once the expansion of mobile access is saturated, it is expected that the need for more bandwidth would become more apparent. Pacific connectivity continues to be a challenge for the region.

In this background, the report presented analysis on regional progress in the implementation of WSIS and remaining gaps. While the target on ICT access has been statistically achieved, this does not necessarily guarantee the deepening of usage. In particular, relevant and meaningful content and applications continue to be a challenge in the region in order to achieve the MDGs.

As a result, the Committee on ICT expressed support for the secretariat's activities in the implementation of the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society, and requested the secretariat to continue to facilitate regional cooperation in achieving the Summit's targets, particularly with regard to mobile applications and broadband development, and taking into account the need to reduce costs and prices and increase the quality of access. The Committee requested the secretariat to continue to undertake policy analysis and research in the areas of ICT policies and regulations inter alia focusing on the problems of landlocked and Pacific island countries, taking into consideration the on-going APT Telecom Policy and Regulatory Forum outputs and proceedings to the suggested activities. The Committee noted that ICT initiatives should not only strengthen regional economic connectivity, but also bring far-flung and hitherto geographically isolated Pacific islands economies into the dynamism that characterized the rest of Asia, taking into account that Pacific connectivity was essential to better connect Asia and the Pacific in the true spirit of the Commission's mandate to foster regional cooperation. The Committee highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for expanding broadband connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and underlined the need to address availability, affordability, reliability and redundancy issues in the future. The Committee noted the importance of m-banking and the possibilities offered by high mobile phone penetration rates in facilitating international remittances among migrant workers and requested the secretariat to study the issue further, within the overall framework of a road map for a conducive ICT environment in the region, while taking into consideration specific conditions of each country and the achievement of the MDGs.

ICT policy and applications

One of the key projects ESCAP implements in the area of ICT for development focuses on updating and aligning ICT policies and applications to emerging technologies, such as mobile and broadband technologies, to achieve the MDGs and WSIS goals. Entitled "Strengthening ICT policies and applications to achieve MDG and WSIS goals in Asia and the Pacific", the project aims to raise awareness among ICT policy and decision makers on emerging technologies and trends in the region, and how to realign ICT policies and applications to accelerate the efforts

towards MDGs and WSIS. The project focused on the linkage between access and usage and recommended the development of socio-economic content and applications based on particular growth patterns of mobile and broadband networks. The project targets the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, while encouraging South-South cooperation by inviting the Republic of Korea, India and China to share their experience, good practices and lessons learned. The concluding meeting⁴ was recently organized in Bangkok.

ICT capacity development

One of the persistent challenges in the implementation of WSIS outcomes has been limited ICT capacity among ICT policy and decision makers. The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT)⁵ is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific that has a mandate to build the human and institutional capacity of the 62 members and associate members of the Commission to use ICT in their socio-economic development. The Centre was established in June 2006 pursuant to Commission resolution 61/6 of 18 May 2005.

The Centre undertakes its activities under the three interrelated pillars of training, research and knowledge management, and advisory services. Under the training pillar, the Centre adopted a training-of-trainers approach and achieved rapid expansion of its Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders (Academy) programme⁶. This programme has been initiated in 17 countries of the region, including many countries with special needs, by establishing strategic partnerships and gaining the support of many other donors. The Academy training curriculum has already been translated into Bahasa Indonesia, Russian and Vietnamese by Academy partners and further localizations are under way. In accordance with the recommendations of the first session of the Committee on ICT and strong demand from member States, two new Academy modules on the use of ICT for disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation are being developed to build the capacity of policymakers and government officials. In June 2009, the Centre also developed and launched the APCICT Virtual Academy⁷, the online distance learning version of the Academy. Given its relevance in varied development contexts, the Academy programme has now been introduced in Africa by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and efforts are also underway to introduce it in Western Asia and Latin America in partnership with the respective UN Regional Commissions.

The Centre organized thematic training on various topics relating to ICT for Development (ICTD), such as e-government, ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, and ICT capacity-building for women. Overall, the Centre has organized 83 Academy and thematic training workshops and events so far. Together with the number of course enrolments in the APCICT

⁴ http://www.unescap.org/idd/events/2010_EGM-ICT/index.asp

⁵ <http://www.unapcict.org/>

⁶ <http://www.unapcict.org/academy>

⁷ <http://www.unapcict.org/ava>

Virtual Academy, over 7,000 participants have been reached. As part of the Centre's efforts under the research and knowledge management pillar, it achieved increased membership on e-Collaborative Hub, an online knowledge-sharing platform for ICTD. It also launched the ICTD Briefing Note Series and Case Study Series, two research publications aimed at enabling a better understanding of ICTD among decision-makers and improving the dissemination of ICTD best practices.

The Centre provided advisory services to the participating national Governments and training partners of the Academy in curriculum customization, instructional design and delivery of ICTD capacity-building training. It also institutionalized the Academy in national capacity-building frameworks in a number of countries to reach as many relevant policymakers as possible. Moreover, the Centre initiated a new project for enhancing the coverage of ICTD in undergraduate and graduate curricula in universities in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Centre's plans for the future include seeking to further expand ICTD capacity-building initiatives—including the Academy programme—using an inclusive and participatory approach, and aligning these initiatives with regional and national needs.