

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

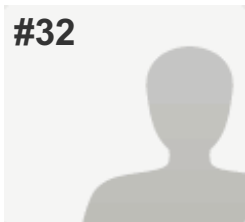
**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS
outcomes**

Submitted by

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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#32

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PAGE 1

Q1: Salutation:

Ms

Q2: First Name, Surname:

Tiziana Bonapace

Q3: Organisation:

UNESCAP

Q4: Country:

Thailand

Q6: Which stakeholder category do you belong to?

Intergovernmental Organization

Q7: To what extent, in your experience, has the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?

In the Asia Pacific region, rapid progress in mobile telephony, have translated into a quasi-ubiquitous access to this form of communication technology, providing connectivity for the first time, including in rural areas. This constitutes an undeniable progress for the millions of people who had previously virtually no access to modern communication facilities.

Progress have been much more uneven in terms of access to other forms of ICT, in particular broadband, even though mobile broadband has facilitated some recent gains. Access to broadband, and the host of development-accelerating potential applications in sectors like education or health, remains very uneven in the Asia-Pacific region, with poorer countries and rural areas often lagging behind.

Q8: How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes to have been achieved?

ESCAP carried a regional review of the realization of the WSIS targets, based on a statistical survey. For the ESCAP region, the survey finds significant progress has been made towards the WSIS objectives in Asia and the Pacific. Progress has been led by mobile telephony, which is now available to most people in the region, with a few exceptions usually dictated by local circumstances. Progress has also been made, though more unequally, in terms of Internet penetration rates. Public institutions and services are increasingly connected to the web, even in poorer countries of the region. Internet connectivity in more advanced countries has expanded faster than in low-income countries, and there also appears to be a gap in terms of quality and speed of connections. There has been some improvement in cultural diversity and the availability of locally relevant content. Overall, the findings seem to illustrate that the digital divide is now often correlated to income levels in the region.

Q9: How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?

ESCAP recent research corroborates previous analysis by other institutions such as the World Bank, that shows that access to ICT accelerates economic development. For developing countries of the Asia-Pacific, ESCAP showed that broadband penetration has a positive impact on growth in GDP per capita. On average, a 10 per cent point increase in broadband penetration is associated with a 1.34 percentage point increase in per capita GDP growth. However, there is a risk that the growing broadband digital divide accelerates disparities in access to knowledge and opportunities for the still too many people living at the margins of societies and areas where broadband is still unaffordable or unavailable.

Q10: What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?

These challenges are multi-pronged and mutually reinforcing in the Asia-Pacific region. They include the lack of local relevant content, the safety of online data and online transactions, as well as deficient education systems and illiteracy. Importantly, in the Asia-Pacific region, broadband access and affordability are also limited by inadequate ICT infrastructure and regulatory framework. The ICT infrastructure in many developing ESCAP countries is designed in a traditional national configuration and results in lack of coverage and uncompetitive markets. Wholesale prices for Internet access are still extremely high in landlocked or small island developing states of ESCAP, which lack alternative fiber routes to procure bandwidth in a more competitive way.

Q11: How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?

In terms of access to broadband, many ESCAP countries would benefit of a more regionally integrated configuration of transmission networks, a vision that would consider these transmission networks as a regional public good. ESCAP is currently promoting more active regional cooperation in developing a regionally meshed connectivity space, the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, based on both maritime and terrestrial fiber networks. ESCAP provides a unique forum in this context, as its cross-sectoral mandate for regional cooperation, involving energy and transport will facilitate the co-deployment of new fiber networks along the cross-country railways, roads and high-voltage transmission lines, leading to important synergies and savings.

Q12: What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?

The emergence of broadband was not foreseen at the time of the Geneva and Tunis Declarations. Broadband opens important new avenues in terms of development, with the risk of an aggravated digital divide for those that cannot access or afford broadband. Data safety and security is also a growing concern that could jeopardize some of the development promises of broadband, such as e-business, among other examples.

Q13: What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?

Ensuring ubiquitous access to affordable broadband, to replicate the "mobile phone miracle". Ensuring also that good practices in terms of E-education and E-government, among others are documented and shared.

Q14: What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?

Given its increasingly important role in every aspects of modern life, and the near-future prospects opened by ICT such as Smart cities, the Internet of Things, and Intelligent Transport Systems, ICT will be at the core of emerging solutions for a sustainable and inclusive development. In light of this role, the International Community will need to define ICT related goals that ensure ICT are affordable and accessible by all, and that citizens can be confident that data-safety is ensured.

Q15: Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.

Measuring ICT remains a challenge, including because ICT are such a rapidly evolving sector. International agencies are supporting developing countries in defining and measuring a set of comparable ICT core indicators, through the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. It is important that this initiative, as well as individual countries' efforts to produce reliable and relevant ICT statistics, are supported in the future. ICT data will be ever more essential for sound ICT policymaking.

Q16: We would also welcome any documents, reports, etc. that you can forward which you think will provide useful evidence for the review. Please send these to cstd-wsis10@unctad.org. It would be helpful if you could list these in this box, together with any URL which enables access to them on the World Wide Web.

The ESCAP secretariat has produced a regional survey reviewing the progress towards the WSIS targets: "Assessing the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific". The report is publically available at:

http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP%20WSIS%20target%20review%20rev%2026%20May_0.pdf