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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS

Submission by

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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 29th 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.

Part One: An executive summary (half a page) of activities undertaken by all stakeholders, progress made, and any obstacles encountered.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is mandated to continue working on the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines, including through regional reviews.[1] To support the implementation of the WSIS action lines at the regional and country levels, the ESCAP secretariat facilitated the intergovernmental events for policy dialogues and agenda setting, implemented projects and activities, and conducted in-depth analytical studies on prioritized issues related to digital connectivity and transformation.

ESCAP provided regional contributions to the successful organization of the WSIS+20 Review and the High-Level Event held in Geneva in July 2025[2], in which it facilitated dialogues among governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders, conducted capacity-building activities at the national level, and carried out research on key areas of digital development, including digital inclusion, infrastructure, and artificial intelligence. These activities promoted knowledge exchange, strengthening policy frameworks and advancing regional cooperation in line with the WSIS action lines and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The secretariat continued to support ESCAP members and associate members in promoting digital inclusion and transformation through regional cooperative mechanisms, notably the "Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS)" initiative[3] and its Action Plan 2022-2026. The APIS Action Plan 2022-2026, as a regional blueprint for digital cooperative actions, are designed and implemented under the ownerships of ESCAP members and associate members to accelerate regional digital cooperation in aligned with WSIS action lines, in particular, action lines C1 (the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development), C2 (ICT infrastructure), C3 (access to information knowledge), C4 (capacity building), C5 (building confidence and security in the ICT use), C6 (enabling environment), C7 (ICT applications – e-employment), C10 (ethical dimensions of the information society), and C11 (international and regional cooperation).

The progress and achievements on the WSIS action lines in the Asia-Pacific region have been promoted and shared with members and associate members and other regional stakeholders at the annual Steering Committee meetings of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) in Jeju, Republic of Korea, October 2024.

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[1] GA/A/70/125

[2] https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/

[3] https://www.unescap.org/our-work/ict-and-disaster-risk-reduction/asia-pacific-information-superhighway-ap-platform

Part Two: A brief (1–2 pages) analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international levels and by all stakeholders, highlighting achievements and obstacles since WSIS and taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders.

The following section summarizes the key insights gained from such projects and studies, highlighting emerging trends, challenges faced, and opportunities available for enhancing digital connectivity and digital transformation in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. Advancing Digital Governance: Lessons from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation.

ESCAP's digital country analyses in Armenia[4], Azerbaijan[5], and the Russian Federation[6], collectively underscore how government technologies and innovations can transform public service delivery, strengthen digital governance, and promote socio-economic development. Armenia's initiatives illustrate how unified platforms, interoperable systems, and e-services can reduce administrative burdens and foster transparency, provided they are supported by strong leadership, capacity building, and infrastructure investment. Azerbaijan's "ASAN Service" demonstrates the power of integrating digital tools, institutional reforms, and social innovation to enhance efficiency, transparency, and inclusion, while the Russian Federation's "GosOblako" highlights the value of consolidating ICT infrastructure through a centralized community cloud platform to cut costs, improve cybersecurity, and accelerate service deployment. Common lessons across all three cases highlight the importance of holistic reforms that align technology with institutional redesigning, inclusive outreach to bridge digital divides, robust governance and accountability frameworks, and resilient digital infrastructures that promote efficient digital public service delivery. Together, these experiences offer practical insights for Asia-Pacific policymakers seeking to build secure, efficient, and citizen-centered digital governments.

2. Promoting Digital Public Services for SMEs in North and Central Asia: Insights from Futures Triangle and Causal Layered Analysis

The ESCAP Working Paper titled "Futures Triangle and Causal Layered Analysis of Digital Public Services for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises"[7] presents a forward-looking analysis of digital public services (DPS) for SMEs in North and Central Asia. Utilizing the Futures Triangle and Causal Layered Analysis methodologies, the paper explores current trends, systemic structures, and underlying worldviews influencing DPS. It identifies four key stakeholder perspectives—government regulators,

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[4] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2025/government-technologies-and-innovations-armenia-insights-bureau-working-group-2-asia

[5] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2025/public-service-technologies-and-social-innovation-azerbaijan-insights-bureau-working-group

[6] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2025/government-technologies-and-innovations-russian-federation-insights-bureau-working-group-2

[7] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2025/futures-triangle-and-causal-layered-analysis-digital-public-services-small-and-medium-sized

service providers, SMEs, and the international community—and examines their visions for the future of DPS. The analysis highlights the necessity for proactive, automated, and integrated digital services that transcend traditional "government-to-business" models, aiming for a more collaborative and efficient ecosystem. The paper underscores the importance of inclusive policy-making, technological advancement, and international cooperation to bridge digital divides and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the region. Building on these insights, together with lessons from other regional workshops, events, and studies, ESCAP developed a Digital Maturity Framework (DMF) in the context of DPS for SMEs.

3. *Bridging the Digital Divide: Strategic Pathways for Rural ICT Connectivity in Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Samoa*

ESCAP country studies [8] on rural ICT connectivity in Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Samoa emphasize that rural and remote areas in these countries lag significantly in digital infrastructure, access, affordability, and human capacity, which constrains inclusive socioeconomic development. The country studies emphasize that closing this digital gap requires: (a) targeted investments in resilient broadband infrastructure (especially in underserved provinces), (b) smart use of public-private partnerships and community networks to lower deployment and operating costs, (c) regulatory and institutional reforms to streamline licensing, spectrum allocation, and oversight, and (d) capacity building at local levels (for digital literacy, local leadership, and ICT maintenance). The country studies advocate coordinated cross-sectoral planning, bottom-up stakeholder engagement, and phased implementation tailored to local conditions, so that digital connectivity becomes a foundation for rural inclusion, resilience and development.

4. *Operationalizing the Pacific Islands Internet Exchange Incorporated*

An ESCAP report [9] documents the establishment in 2024 of the Pacific Islands Internet Exchange Incorporated (PIEI) as a legal entity, its initial governance structure, and operational groundwork for enhancing Internet traffic management among Pacific Island countries—specifically Fiji, Samoa, and New Zealand. Key achievements include its formal incorporation in New Zealand, monthly committee meetings to appoint leadership and define roles, and securing seed funding for 2025 operations. The report also outlines priorities going forward in 2025, including: expanding membership to more Pacific islands, establishing administrative and financial mechanisms for sustainability, ensuring regulatory clarity and alignment among participating nations, and building capacity for coordination, technical, and operational functions. Once operational, the Pacific Islands Internet Exchange is expected to reduce

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[8] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/promoting-rural-ict-connectivity-lao-peoples-democratic-republic-actionable-strategy-report & https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/rural-ict-connectivity-lao-peoples-democratic-republic

[9] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/operationalisation-pacific-islands-internet-exchange-incorporated

latency and cost for regional traffic exchange, thereby boosting Internet quality, affordability, and resilience across smaller Pacific Island countries.

Part Three: A brief description (1-2 pages) of:

(a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, progress in achieving those targets and strategies should be reported.

1.   WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025: Regional Leadership in Global Digital Governance[10]

The secretariat coordinated support to the landmark WSIS+20 High-Level Event held from 7-11 July 2025 in Geneva, marking the 20th anniversary of the World Summit on Information Society. In her remarks at the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, UN Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana emphasized that while rapid technological advances such as artificial intelligence offer immense opportunities, their true value lies in empowering marginalized communities and advancing sustainable development. She highlighted three key drivers of progress: strong political commitment at the regional level, exemplified by the Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation; inclusive multistakeholder cooperation through platforms such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway; and strengthened international support for developing countries to establish effective regulatory frameworks for frontier technologies like artificial intelligence. Looking beyond 2025, she reaffirmed ESCAP's commitment to working UN partners to advance WSIS outcomes and accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2.   Women ICT Frontier Initiative: Scaling Digital Entrepreneurship

The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development of ESCAP continued to organize capacity building workshops under the Women ICT Frontier Initiative to strengthen the digital capacities of women entrepreneurs in Asia. For example, one workshop[11] was held on 12–13 August in Almaty in collaboration with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace, focused on building trainers' capacity through courses on e-commerce and digital marketing, as well as data analytics for women entrepreneurs, covering ethical data use, customer protection, and strategies to improve decision-making and business performance. Another workshop[12] was held on 4-5 September in Vientiane with the Ministry of Technologies and Communications and the Digital Economy Promotion Agency, aimed to to support women micro and

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[10] https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/

[11] https://www.unapcict.org/events/training-trainers-empowering-women-entrepreneurs-through-digital-transformation-women-ict-frontier-initiative-wifi-dx

[12] https://www.unapcict.org/events/empowering-women-entrepreneurs-through-digital-transformation-women-ict-frontier-initiative-wifi-dx

small medium enterprises entrepreneurs in overcoming systemic barriers and leveraging digital tools for resilience and growth. This training programme emphasized digital entrepreneurship and policy, e-commerce and digital marketing, and business continuity planning, combining technical training with policy discussions and practical exercises to enhance both entrepreneurial and institutional capacities.

3. *Leveraging digital technologies for climate action in Pacific Island countries*

The KOICA-ESCAP joint capacity-building workshop[13], [14] held from 20–30 August 2025 in Brisbane, Australia, aimed to enhance the capabilities of government officials from Pacific Island countries in designing and implementing policies and programs that utilize digital technologies to address climate change impacts. The workshop targeted officials from Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga, specializing in ICT, climate, and environmental sectors, alongside selected regional experts.

The program featured thematic modules on digital governance, data utilization, climate adaptation strategies, and technology-enabled solutions. It incorporated interactive training sessions, field visits, and peer-learning opportunities to foster practical skill development. The workshop's primary objectives were to equip participants with the skills to integrate digital strategies into national climate adaptation frameworks, facilitate regional knowledge exchange, and accelerate policy implementation across participating Pacific Island countries.

The KOICA-ESCAP joint capacity building workshop, held from 20 to 30 August 2025 in Brisbane, Australia, sought to strengthen government officials' understanding and capability to design and implement policies and programmes using digital technologies to address climate change impacts in Pacific Island countries. The targeted participants were government officials working in the areas of ICT, and climate and environment respectively, nominated from Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga, along with selected experts. The training programme spanned thematic modules on digital governance, data, climate adaptation, and technology-enabled solutions, with interactive training, field visits, and peer learning built in. The training workshop aimed to produce a cohort of officials equipped to integrate digital strategies in national climate adaptation frameworks, promote regional knowledge exchange, and accelerate policy action across participating Pacific Island countries.

4. *Strengthening Digital Public Services for Small and Medium Enterprises in North and Central Asia*

The ESCAP Regional Roundtable on Digital Public Services for Small and Medium Enterprises[15] was held on 26–27 August 2025 in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation. This event marked the culmination

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[13] https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/koica-escap-joint-capacity-building-training-programme-digital-technologies-addressing

[15] https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/regional-roundtable-digital-public-services-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises

of a multi-year initiative under the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) Action Plan 2022–2026, aimed at bolstering policies and regulatory frameworks for SME-focused digital public services (DPS) in North and Central Asia.

Convening high-level policymakers, academics, and representatives from the public and private sectors engaged in innovation and technology, the roundtable facilitated the dissemination of project findings. It also launched and promoted ESCAP's newly developed Digital Maturity Framework (DMF) for DPS tailored to SMEs, alongside associated assessment tools for evaluating the digital maturity of such services and a proof-of-concept interstate digital maturity business card leveraging a blockchain-based information system. Additionally, the meeting spotlighted a new regional cooperation platform under the APIS initiative.

Key outcomes included discussions on establishing a regional platform for exchanging DPS best practices, recognizing the value of assessing digital service system maturity, endorsing harmonized frameworks to facilitate SME internationalization, and deliberating on a proposal to form a group of DPS experts to advance regional digital collaboration.

5. Advancing Cross-Border Data-Sharing for Digital Transformation

Since November 2023, ESCAP, in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and ICT of the Republic of Korea, has been implementing a cross-border data-sharing project to enhance the quality of digital services and support the creation of an integrated digital services market in the Asia-Pacific region. The initiative aims to promote cross-border data-sharing cooperation and improve data utilization efficiency through coordinated regional action. The pilot project involves three participating countries, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, and Uzbekistan, and focuses on developing a pilot data-sharing framework and conducting pilot tests through stakeholder engagement. To date, ESCAP has convened three stakeholder meetings and undertaken preliminary research on data-sharing policy. Building on these efforts, further analysis will be conducted to assess data-sharing demand in each pilot country and refine the framework to reflect national contexts and cross-border requirements. Research findings and pilot outcomes will be shared with pilot countries, and ESCAP members and associate members to raise awareness, strengthen policymaking capacity, and foster knowledge exchange on digital data-sharing. A regional capacity-building workshop will be held in December 2025 in Seoul to share key outcomes, exchange best practices, and discuss future cooperation opportunities. The initiative is expected to guide future regional cooperation and support the development of a trusted cross-border data environment.

6. Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Digital Data Governance

In June 2025, ESCAP, in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, convened a regional capacity-building workshop in Bangkok to enhance institutional capabilities in digital data governance and cross-border cooperation. The event brought together senior officials and experts from across the Asia-Pacific region to exchange best practices, assess national data governance

readiness using the UN E-Government Development Index toolkit, and explore policy, institutional, and regulatory approaches to data management. Discussions emphasized the importance of accountability, effectiveness, and inclusiveness in shaping data governance frameworks and highlighted opportunities for leveraging digital data ecosystems to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The workshop also served as an informal platform for Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway bureau members to review progress under the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022–2026 and to initiate early discussions on the 2027–2030 Action Plan, including priorities related to artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, and cross-border data-sharing. Outcomes from the meeting directly informed future regional cooperation mechanisms, guiding policy harmonization, institutional reform, and capacity-building efforts across the region.

(b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above.

A series of major events, including high-level policy dialogues and analytical research activities, will continue to be organized throughout the remainder of 2025 to further advance digital connectivity and transformation under the ongoing implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022–2026.

In December 2025, the ninth session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee will convene in Cambodia. The Steering Committee will review a draft Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan for 2027–2030, which will serve as a regional blueprint for cooperative actions among ESCAP members and partners to advance digital connectivity and transformation based on the achievements of the current Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022–2026, as well as responding to evolving regional digital development priorities.

In parallel, the secretariat continues to provide ESCAP members and associate members with coordination and facilitation services for discussions and decisions on the establishment of a new Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development, as proposed by the Government of Kazakhstan. It will serve as a regional institution of ESCAP for knowledge exchange, capacity development, and collaborative digital policy innovation by leveraging the digital solutions of its members to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.