



Measuring the Information Society



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I n t e r n a t i o n a l T e l e c o m m u n i c a t i o n U n i o n

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2010

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2010 edition of *Measuring the Information Society*, which features the latest *ICT Development Index (IDI)* and *ICT Price Basket* – two benchmarking tools to monitor information society developments worldwide. This new edition of the report highlights key trends at the global, regional and national levels, showcasing top performers and identifying the main drivers of change. The report also examines the evolution of the digital divide between 2002 and 2008 and discusses price developments over the last year.

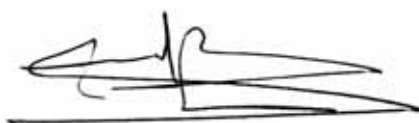
The report shows that despite the recent economic downturn, the use of ICT services, such as mobile phones and the Internet, has continued to grow worldwide. All 159 countries included in the IDI have improved their scores during the past year confirming the ongoing diffusion of ICTs and the overall transition to a global information society. The top-ranking economies continue to be primarily high-income countries from the developed world but a number of developing countries have shown strong improvements in their IDI scores and rankings between 2007 and 2008. There are large inter- and intra-regional disparities in IDI performance, especially in the Americas and Asia and the Pacific regions, reflecting the income differences in those regions. The IDI results show that although the digital divide is still significant, it is slightly shrinking, especially between those countries with very high ICT levels and those with lower levels. Moreover, high IDI growth in some developing countries illustrates that countries with low ICT levels can catch up relatively quickly, provided their ICT sectors receive adequate policy attention.

High costs of ICT services are often a major barrier to ICT uptake, in particular in low-income economies. The ICT Price Basket, which combines the price of fixed telephony, mobile cellular and fixed broadband Internet services into one measure, allows policy makers to compare the cost of ICT services across countries. It also provides a starting point for looking into ways

of lowering prices – for example, by introducing or strengthening competition, by reviewing specific tariff policies and by evaluating operators' revenues and efficiency. I am encouraged to see that during the past year, ICT services have become more affordable worldwide. Among the three services examined, fixed broadband services showed the largest price fall, followed by mobile cellular and fixed telephone services. Despite these improvements, the broadband price gap between developed and developing countries remains huge and broadband access remains the single most expensive and least affordable ICT service in the developing world. Moreover, countries with the highest broadband prices are all ranked relatively low in the IDI, reinforcing the argument that the affordability of services is crucial to building an inclusive information society.

The role of ICTs in enhancing economic growth and socio-economic development is now well established. Measuring the impact of ICT uptake is therefore a critical input to ICT policy making. I am pleased to see that an increasing number of Member States collect ICT household - or demand side - data, which serve as a useful input to improve the research on ICT impact. The report shows that having Internet access at home could improve educational achievements, female labour force participation and child health. After all, it is only through the successful use of ICTs that real social and economic benefits will occur.

The main objective of *Measuring the Information Society* is to inform the ICT policy debate in ITU Member States by providing a comprehensive international performance evaluation based on quantitative indicators and benchmarks, and by identifying areas of high and low growth in ICT-related development. It is my hope that the report will be useful to policy makers, the ICT industry, market analysts and others who are monitoring global ICT developments. Governments and industry alike need to observe continuously market developments in order to assess their ICT policies and strategies and identify areas that warrant further attention.



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