



Measuring the Information Society



The **I**CT **D**evelopment **I**ndex

2009



International
Telecommunication
Union

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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The ICT Development Index

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present to you the latest edition of *Measuring the Information Society*, which features the new ITU **ICT Development Index**. The Index captures the level of advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in more than 150 countries worldwide and compares progress made between 2002 and 2007. Its main objective is to provide policy makers with a useful tool to benchmark and assess their information society developments and to monitor progress that has been made globally to close the digital divide.

The need to develop an ICT index was emphasized in the outcome documents of the two World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS). The Geneva Plan of Action calls for a realistic international performance evaluation and benchmarking through comparable statistical indicators, and the creation of a composite index. This was reiterated in the Tunis Agenda, which calls for periodic evaluation through indicators and benchmarking, and an assessment of the magnitude of the digital divide.

This publication has been produced in response to those calls and following the request from ITU members to develop a single ITU index to track the digital divide and to measure countries' progress towards becoming information societies.

The ICT Development Index takes into consideration, as much as possible, the many, and varied comments and suggestions provided by members and experts on the creation of the single index. While we are aware of the fact that we cannot do justice to everyone – in reality no composite index can fulfil this goal – we are confident that we have produced an index that will be useful to all member countries – those that are more ICT advanced as well as those that are still developing their ICT infrastructure and services. The index can be easily replicated by interested countries; it also allows to measure the magnitude of the global digital divide, and to monitor its evolution.

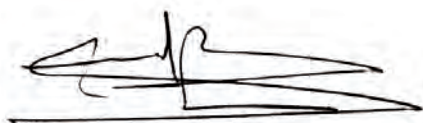
This Report examines global and regional ICT developments during the past five years based on the index results. They reveal that despite huge improvements that were made in the access and use of ICTs worldwide, large

disparities remain among countries. The top ranking economies are primarily high-income countries from the developed world, whereas the least developed countries rank towards the bottom of the index. Despite impressive growth in the uptake of mobile telephony in many countries, the magnitude of the digital divide remains almost unchanged. However, the divide is slightly closing between countries with very high and those with low ICT levels.

An important element in monitoring ICT developments is to examine the cost of ICT services. High tariffs are often a major barrier to ICT uptake, in particular among poor people. I am pleased to present to you our new ICT Price Basket, which combines fixed telephone, mobile cellular and fixed broadband tariffs into one measure and compares it across countries, not only in absolute values, but relative to countries' national incomes. The results show that fixed and mobile telephony is becoming more and more affordable worldwide; however, fixed broadband Internet is still out of reach – in terms of affordability – for the majority of the world's inhabitants. This is clearly one of the main policy challenges that need to be addressed in this sector in the years to come. We foresee to publish the new ICT Price Basket annually and therefore countries will be able to monitor global price developments over time.

The Report comes out at a time when the global economy is facing one of its greatest challenges in decades. We do not know yet how long the crisis will last or how profound its impact will be on future ICT developments. This will be revealed only in the next edition of *Measuring the Information Society*. But given the fact that ICTs are one of the most powerful engines of growth, that there has been strong and uninterrupted growth in most ICT services over the past few years and that the demand for ICTs from large developing countries is high, I am confident that ICTs will continue to spread and serve their purpose as critical development enablers.

It is my hope that this Report will be useful to policy makers, the ICT industry, market analysts and others who are monitoring global ICT developments. After all, it is evidence-based policy making that will have the greatest impact on countries' efforts to become inclusive information societies.



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