

**Information and Communications Technology and Disaster
Risk Reduction Division
ICT and Development Section**

**The Meeting on the Regional Review of the World
Summit on the Information Society Action Line
Implementation**

SUMMARY REPORT (DRAFT)

4 October 2016, UNCC, Bangkok

Background of the Meeting

1. In the outcomes of the UN General Assembly overall review on the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (GA Resolution A/70/125)¹, regional commissions are invited to coordinate the implementation of the WSIS at the regional level. In this context, the ESCAP adopted its resolution 72/10², mandating the ESCAP secretariat to support the member States and relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the WSIS action lines, and in particular, to hold a regional review of the implementation of the Summit action lines as part of the session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation (CICTSTI)³; and coordinate United Nations agencies and partners in the regional review and follow-up towards harmonized approaches in the implementation of the Summit.
2. This meeting on the regional review of the WSIS implementation⁴ provided a platform for information sharing and collection of regional inputs on the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, in particular WSIS Action Lines, towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The vital role of ICTs as a catalyst for development is specifically recognized in the new development framework “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which acknowledges that “the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress and to develop knowledge societies, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy”. To that end, the WSIS-SDGs Matrix, developed by the UN Action Line Facilitators, clearly shows the linkage between each Action Line and the 17 SDGs and provides rationale for each⁵

¹ Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

² Regional review of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines

³ <http://www.unescap.org/events/committee-information-and-communications-technology-science-technology-and-innovation-first>

⁴ <http://www.unescap.org/events/world-summit-information-society-wsis-and-inter-agency-working-group-ict-meeting>

⁵ www.wsis.org/sdg

3. More specifically, the main purpose of this meeting was to provide a platform for stakeholders, in particular Action Line Facilitators, international and regional organizations, experts and government representatives, implementing the WSIS Action Lines at the regional level, to share good practices, foster partnerships, identify regional challenges and opportunities, while strengthening alignment between implementation of the WSIS and SDGs. This meeting provided structured opportunities to network, learn and participate in multi-stakeholder discussions and consultations on the WSIS implementation.
4. In this context, this meeting focused on sharing of best practices and flagship initiatives, such as
 - Emerging trends, challenges and opportunities in building inclusive information and knowledge societies (WSIS Action Line Facilitators)
 - Examples of national sustainable development plans integrating the ICT components and opportunities for United Nations Development Assistance Framework UNDAF (UN and government experts)
 - Sharing of best practices (WSIS Prize Winners from the region) and flagship initiatives (Relevant stakeholders)
 - Multi-stakeholder discussion on strengthening implementation of WSIS Action Lines to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs
5. This meeting also contributed to the Inter-agency Working Group on ICT, thereby facilitating information sharing among the WSIS Action Line Facilitators at the regional level. This meeting was supported by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, playing leading facilitating role in the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action (para 109 of the Tunis Agenda), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ESCAP (UN Regional Commission); and other UN Agencies playing a leading facilitating role in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines.
6. The outcomes of this meeting were expected to serve as inputs to the WSIS Forum (12-16 June 2017, Geneva, Switzerland) and its open consultation process, WSIS Stocktaking, WSIS Prizes, thereby bringing to forefront emerging trends, opportunities and challenges from the regional layer in a multi-stakeholder format.

Regional good practices shared would be highlighted at the global level within the framework of the official WSIS Stocktaking process. In addition, outcomes of the meeting would be reported to the ESCAP Committee and Commission sessions.

Objectives of the meeting:

7. The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Building regional capacity on the WSIS implementation review process and its alignment with 2030 Agenda:
- Building awareness on the enabling role of ICTs in sustainable development and programming of future UNDAFs
- Regional review of the WSIS action lines implementation in accordance with ESCAP resolution 72/10
- Interagency collaboration on ICT for sharing of information and best practices from national, regional and global experiences including for the WSIS Prize Winner 2017.
- Contributing as the regional formal submission to the WSIS Forum 2017 Open Consultation Process by bringing the regional trends, challenges and opportunities to the global dialogue on the WSIS implementation.

Organization of the Meeting

8. The meeting was attended by ESCAP Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Working Group members, AP-IS Steering Group members, ESCAP's international and regional partners, and other institutions (refer to Annex 1 for Participant's list). The meeting's agenda is attached (Annex 2). The meeting was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Room A, on 4 October 2016.

Session 1: Welcoming Remarks

9. Mr. Ioane Koroivuki, Regional Director of ITU, opened the session by welcoming all participants and introducing the panel. He underlined the importance of this meeting to review progress with regard to the information society, in particular,

posing the questions of where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are heading.

10. Mr. Koroivuki added that the meeting was of significant importance as it was the first regional review after the UN General Assembly and ITU encouraged the UN regional commissions to continue strengthening the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines at the regional level. He also emphasized the need for building regional capacity for the implementation of WSIS Action Lines and noted that the outcomes of the meeting would serve as input for the next WSIS review meeting in Geneva, in 2017.
11. He also noted that ITU Prize Winners were participating to share experiences on the WSIS implementation. While emphasizing the enabling role of ICT in sustainable development, he stated that harnessing the benefits of ICT is a key priority for ITU. He noted that the digital divide issues should be addressed and modernization of policies is of significant importance to ITU and highlighted that ITU is working closely with the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop strategies for e-agriculture as an example.
12. Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Incoming Director, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD), ESCAP, delivered her welcoming remarks and expressed her appreciation to ITU for the effective partnership with ESCAP to promote ICT for development at the regional level. Notably, she highlighted that ESCAP and ITU teamed up for the mapping of fibre optic connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and noted that ITU continued this effort at the global level, which reflected the expertise and great advantages of partnership.
13. Ms. Bonapace also noted that the Asia-Pacific region has led the ICT growth globally in the past decade, with several countries leading on innovation frontiers. However, the Asia-Pacific region, as a whole, continues to face major development challenges. In fact, ESCAP's analytical work has clearly shown a widening digital divide for the region. Looking forward, she stated that the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) will bring enhanced opportunities for all: broadband connectivity and improvement in affordability and access. The AP-IS initiative is essential to achieving SDGs, and called upon participants to share their wealth of collective expertise and perspectives and encourage collaboration to address the digital divide challenges at the regional level.

14. Mr. Malcolm Johnson, Deputy Secretary-General, ITU, delivered his keynote speech and congratulated ESCAP on being the first UN Regional Commission to organize a meeting on reviewing the WSIS Action Line implementation at the regional level. He noted that while ITU is the lead facilitating agency on the Geneva Action Plan, it is important for ITU to work closely with Regional Commissions. He added that the Asia-Pacific region is very diverse and hence encounters unique challenges, particularly for remote countries such as Tonga. To this respect, ITU has been working for many years to bridge the digital divide, noting that technology is moving at a fast pace, which makes it challenging for developing countries to keep up.
15. Mr. Johnson noted that various industry sectors are now dependent on ICTs and while many used to work in isolation, collaboration is now needed to benefit from innovations and coordination to realize any progress. Therefore, bringing the benefits of ICTs to all citizens of the world is essential to achieve SDGs. He added that particularly through ICTs progress towards all 17 SDGs can be accelerated. In that light, sharing of best practices is desired in order to address ICT challenges within the region. Mr. Johnson concluded that he looked forward to a productive meeting with fruitful discussions.
16. Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Chief, ICT and Development Section, IDD, ESCAP, reiterated that the objectives of the meeting were to enhance regional capacity on the WSIS implementation review process and its alignment with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; building awareness on the enabling role of ICTs in sustainable development and programming of future UNDAFs; conducting a regional review of the WSIS Action Lines implementation in accordance with ESCAP resolution 72/10; promoting interagency collaboration on ICT for sharing of information and best practices from national, regional and global experiences including for the WSIS Prize Winner 2017; and contributing to the WSIS Forum Process by bringing regional trends, challenges and opportunities to the global dialogue on the WSIS implementation.
17. Furthermore, Ms. Okuda stressed the need for appropriate financing mechanisms for developing the information society, as well as the need for a multi-stakeholder approach and mainstreaming ICT into national strategy development policies to address the widening digital divide in Asia and the Pacific. She concluded by

emphasizing the importance of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative in enhancing broadband connectivity.

Activities and plans by agencies for the WSIS Action Line Implementation:

18. Mr. Masanori Kondo, Deputy Secretary-General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), introduced the work of the organization, and stated that all activities were related to the action plan of WSIS. He stated that APT in particular conducted seminars and other capacity building programmes in the areas of disaster management and industry trends such as big data, and cloud computing. Mr. Kondo noted that sharing of best practices was critical to address the ICT challenges the region faces.
19. Ms. Maria Melizza Tan, Programme Officer, UNESCO Bangkok, noted that UNESCO has been implementing various programmes with a particular focus on e-education. She noted that with regards to the Asia-Pacific region, inclusive and equitable education is one of the priorities of the SDGs (SDG 4 - equitable education). She added that building partnerships and realizing enabling policies are considered to be important by UNESCO towards promoting equitable education. Ms. Tan also recognized that making use of ICT more effective in education is of key importance to UNESCO.
20. In addition, Ms. Tan stated that following an UNESCO meeting in 2015, UNESCO has been using open education resources, online learning and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation networks to promote equitable education. She added that a ministerial forum is organized every 2 years for ministries of education in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss equitable education, and in particular, use of ICT for effective delivery of education for all. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of localized content.
21. Mr. Gerard Sylvester, Regional Knowledge and Information Management Officer, Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), introduced the e-agriculture strategy guide of FAO in Asia Pacific, which has been developed in cooperation with ITU. He stated that the guide contains inputs from various partners and has been developed to assist policymakers to formulate e-agriculture strategies. In particular, he stated that the e-agriculture strategies would make sustainable solutions and apply a multi-stakeholder approach for agricultural production. He noted that while ICT is

not a silver bullet, ICT however could definitely play an important role in developing certain areas of agriculture production and marketing. He concluded that FAO aims to bring together experts on e-agriculture to share best practices and noted that earlier approaches to the development agricultural production and marketing were not effective due to people working in silos, and therefore stressed on the need to have a multi-stakeholder approach.

Discussions by Participants:

22. The representative of Nepal noted that ICT could potentially play an important role in education in Nepal, but he would like to know whether UNESCO encountered copyright issues when customizing education materials to local needs. In response, the representative of UNESCO noted that UNESCO is heavily promoting ‘Open Education Resources’ (OER) policy in material development. In particular, training teachers is one of the key issues to ensure the effective use of OER, which could also benefit Nepal.
23. The representative of Tonga thanked the organisers and also the earlier speakers for their valuable presentations and asked the representatives of APT and UNESCO on ‘how to coordinate the need for e-education projects’. In response, the representative of APT replied that a proposal should be submitted to APT and added that there is a framework available for implementation of education projects in specific Member Countries. The representative of UNESCO noted that Member States in the Pacific could approach the UNESCO regional office in the Pacific for specific assistance.
24. Mr. Koroivuki (ITU) summarized the first session by noting that the area of

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