



**Working Group on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway
Second meeting**

Guangzhou, People's Republic of China

29-30 August 2016

REPORT

16 September 2016

Item 1: Opening of the Second Session of the Working Group of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway (AP-IS)

1. The representative of ESCAP welcomed the participants to the Second Working Group meeting of the AP-IS with the objective to collectively discuss how to promote inclusive and resilient broadband connectivity in Asia and the Pacific. Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Chief of Information and Communications Technology and Development Section of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction (IDD) of ESCAP thanked the co-host of the meeting, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, for the generous support and warm hospitality received during the preparation for the meeting. In addition, she acknowledged the continued support from the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning of the Republic of Korea.
2. In delivering the welcoming remarks, Ms. Yonghong Zhao, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China welcomed the participants to the city of Guangzhou. She underlined the critical role of information and communications technology in socio-economic development of the region and the ministry's continued and expanded support towards AP-IS and wished participants fruitful deliberation.
3. Representing the government of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Sang-yirl Nam of the Korean Information Society Development Institute (KISDI), reiterated its long standing support to AP-IS since its inception and through the hosting of the first working group meeting in September 2015 in Incheon. The Republic of Korea continued to recognize AP-IS as one of the most important regional initiatives which would shape the future of the region. He further noted that the UN and the global community have set the Sustainable Development Goals and are currently seeking diverse methods to reach them. ICT has gained special attention as effective means of implementation, and ICT infrastructure is emerging as a crucial factor for achieving the SDGs. He believed that the AP-IS initiative was a very timely topic in this context. Despite achieving remarkable economic growth and social development, the Asia-Pacific region remained to have a significant digital divide. He further stated that it was hard to achieve continuous development in a knowledge and information-based society without access to information.
4. On behalf of the Chair of the First Meeting of the AP-IS, Mr. Zaad Raman Asif, Director in the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications in Pakistan delivered the report of the Chair and expressed appreciation to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China and the ESCAP secretariat for organizing the meeting with generous support.

5. The representative of Pakistan stated that the first meeting of the AP-IS Working Group meeting in September 2015 agreed to develop the AP-IS Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework which consist of the long-term vision, targeted goals, specific activities and milestones with regard to the four pillars: Strengthening regional broadband terrestrial back-bone network; establishing sufficient Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), harmonizing Internet traffic management systems and policies; enhancing transmission infrastructure resilience; and providing inclusive access to broadband internet for all. The first working group members also decided to establish a Steering Group to draft and review the Master Plan and regional cooperation framework for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway.
6. He added that according to the decision at the first working group meeting, the Steering Group drafted Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework, and subsequently tabled them in the current meeting. In addition, he noted that the first Working Group specifically decide to propose amendments to the “Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network” and the “Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network” to leverage existing regional connectivity opportunities and to achieve rapid, cost-effective deployment of terrestrial backbone network.
7. The representative of Pakistan invited the delegate of Bangladesh to share the progress in requesting for amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway Network. In response, the representative of Bangladesh thanked the Chair and expressed the support of his Government to the AP-IS initiative and the efforts made in submitting the above mentioned requests.

Item 2: Election of Bureau for the Working Group

8. The below Bureau composition was agreed upon by the participants. The representative of Viet Nam proposed Bangladesh for the Chair. The representative of Kyrgyzstan proposed the People’s Republic of China and the Philippines to be the Vice-Chairs respectively. The representative of Palau proposed Tonga to be the Rapporteur. The nomination for the new Bureau was adopted by the meeting.
9. The meeting was attended by ESCAP Working Group members, Steering Group members, ESCAP’s international and regional partners, private sectors and other institutions (refer to Annex 1 for Participant’s list).

Item 3: Organization of work and adoption of the agenda

10. The Chair opened the session by outlining the objective of the meeting which was to review and finalize the draft AP-IS Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework documents.
11. The Agenda (Annex 2) for the Meeting was adopted.

Item 4: State of ICT in Asia and the Pacific

12. The representative of ESCAP presented relevant findings from their recently released report titled “State of ICT in Asia and the Pacific 2016”, noting that the digital divide in Asia and the Pacific is indeed widening over time. She noted that the perceptions on the quality of regulations is strongly linked to broadband access and suggested that quality regulations imposed policy certainty for private investment in the ICT sector.
13. A representative of ESCAP, Mr. Siope Vakataki ‘Ofa, presented on ESCAP’s online platform titled “ICT and DRR Gateway”, which would benefit member countries through encouraging information sharing and news. Following the presentation, the representative of Tonga asked how could member countries sign up to this DRR online platform. In response, the representative of ESCAP replied that flyers have been distributed as printed hardcopies to each participant for ease of reference.
14. The representative from LIRNEasia emphasized the importance of wired infrastructure over wireless for long-term and more reliable connectivity, while reiterating the technology neutral nature of the AP-IS Master Plan.
15. As to the Internet traffic, the APNIC representative highlighted three factors which would affect the implementation of AP-IS, namely the future Internet traffic, IPv6 readiness of the region and cyber security.
16. The delegation of Pakistan expressed the need to consider wireless technology such as satellite communications, as well as wired technologies be included in the plan, as the terrain and circumstances should determine appropriate technology.
17. Several participants expressed interests in China's policies which were presented by Mr. Hui Chen of China Academy on Information and Communication Technology and were proven effective in expanding broadband connectivity in China. ESCAP was requested to compile the policies in collaboration with partners such as the World Bank. In response to the question on China's practice in peering and transit arrangement, Mr. Chen responded by saying that it is being studied at the moment.

18. Regarding the question on the Universal Service Obligations (USO) from the delegate of Cambodia, Mr. Chen informed the meeting participants that it was considered as operators responsibilities but now some funds are allocated for rural connectivity in the form of auction. The delegate of Nepal also asked about re- purposing USO for broadband and fiber rollout.
19. A number of questions were asked about UNESCOs initiative to connect schools, made by Ms. Jonghwi Park, Programme Specialist and Head of ICT in Education at UNESCO Bangkok as well as about the initiatives of the World Bank presented by Ms. Natasha Beschorner, Senior ICT Policy Specialist of the World Bank. One suggestion which came out of the discussion was if school connectivity can be monitored by ESCAP and UNESCO within the frame work of AP-IS. The delegate of Pakistan asked if corporate sponsored initiatives in education might be sustainable or not, which could be discussed in a larger context.
20. The LIRNEasia representative underlined the importance of co-deploying fiber optic cables along the power lines, while emphasizing the open access principle.

Item 5: The Work of the Steering Group

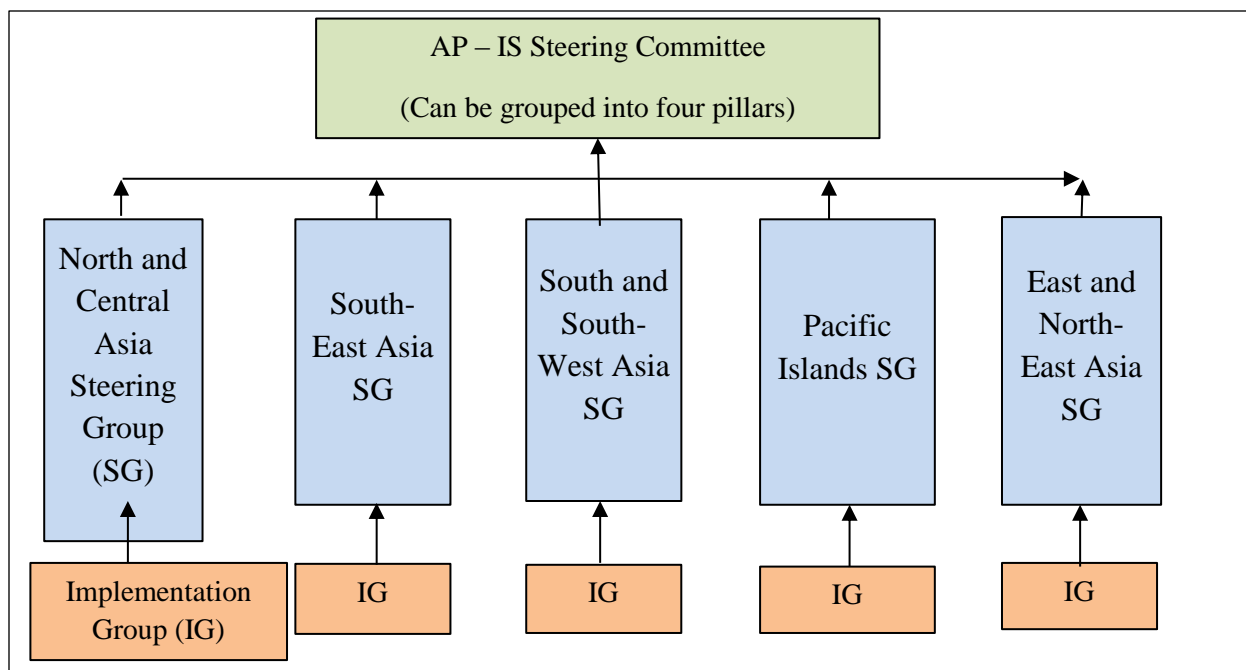
21. The work of the Steering Group was presented by Mr. Yeong Ro Lee of the National Information Society Agency (NIA) of the Republic of Korea.
22. The representative from the World Bank inquired about what has been done in promoting open access and regulatory reforms among the ESCAP member countries, given the importance of the topic. The secretariat clarified that the meeting aimed to confirm open access to be the critical principle in promoting regional broadband connectivity at the strategic level and if confirmed, concrete activities will be planned.
23. The delegate from Pakistan asked if aerial broadband should also be included in addition to the terrestrial cables, given some terrains and geographical predicaments. The Chair responded that the Master Plan does not determine technology to be used.
24. The delegate from Nepal, while confirming the importance of open access principle also echoed that the infrastructural synergies, such as co- deployment with power lines, should be taken into account.
25. The delegate from the Philippines underscored the importance of e- resilience and requested more attention to be paid in the selection of the strategic initiatives of AP-IS.

Item 6: Group Discussions

26. The Chair of the Working Group explained that Working Group will be divided into two parallel group discussions. One group would focus discussion on the ‘Governance structure’ of the AP-IS Master Plan, while the second group would focus on the ‘Strategic Initiatives and partnership/funding mechanisms’ of the AP-IS Master Plan.

Governance structure

27. The Working Group members agreed to set up an Asia Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Steering Committee with the membership open to all ESCAP member countries and relevant partner institutions. This was proposed instead of the Advisory Board originally reflected in the draft Master Plan. It is also recognized that Steering Committee can be grouped along the four pillars of AP-IS, namely, Connectivity, Traffic Management, E-Resilience and Digital Divide.
28. The Working Group members discussed and agreed to set up Sub-regional Steering Groups according to the five ESCAP geographical sub-regions (North and Central-Asia, South-East Asia, South and South-East Asia, Pacific Islands, and East and North-East Asia), instead of specific organizations reflected in the draft Master Plan, to accommodate all member countries and organizations who have interests in certain sub-regions.
29. The Working Group members discussed and agreed to establish an Implementation Group under each Sub-regional Steering Group to carry out actual project implementation. The Working Group members agreed and proposed the following Governance structure:



30. The Working Group members also agreed that the ESCAP secretariat shall incorporate the explanatory paragraph of the Governance Structure and related paragraphs based on the above discussions.
31. The Working Group members agreed that the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the AP-IS Steering Committee should be similar to the current AP-IS Working Group with the member countries and partner institutions.
32. The Working Group members further agreed that the AP-IS Steering Committee meeting will be held once a year and a Bureau will be elected by the ESCAP member countries.
33. They agreed that the AP-IS Steering Committee's main role will be to monitor and review the implementation of the AP-IS Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework; and coordinate the sub-regional Steering Group and related issues. In addition, the members agreed that the Steering Committee could set up an Advisory Board if needed as a technical advisory body.
34. The Working Group members agreed that any ESCAP member countries who are interested in any sub-region could join that sub-regional Steering Group regardless of their geographical sub-regional affiliation. The focus and therefore agenda of such sub-region must however be confined to the interest of that particular sub-region.
35. The Working Group members agreed that the sub-regional Steering Groups set up Implementation Groups to carry out specific projects. The role and responsibility of the Sub-

regional Steering Group will focus on the coordination of the implementation of sub-regional projects and interests.

36. The Working Group members agreed that ESCAP secretariat shall draft the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee and Sub-regional Steering Group based on the above comments and reflect them in the draft Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework Document.

Strategic Initiatives and funding mechanisms

37. The Vice-Chair (Philippines) welcomed participants and explained that the draft AP-IS Master Plan has seven proposed initiatives for the Working Group members to consider.
38. With regard to Initiative 1: “Identification, coordination, deployment, expansion and integration of the regional backbone networks at cross-border, intra- and inter-regional levels in collaboration with member countries and sub-regional organizations”, the representative of LIRNEasia stated that it could contribute to this Initiative.
39. The representative of Tonga stated that there was a need to note the economics of funding for infrastructure ICT needs from a Pacific perspective. The Secretariat clarified that there is an initiative on funding.
40. The representative of the World Bank reminded the meeting that ‘developing and plan for data centers’ may not be economically feasible in certain countries as some countries were adopting newer technologies including ‘cloud information sharing and other cheaper alternatives’.
41. With regards to Initiative 2 “Establishing a sufficient number of Internet exchange points at national and sub-regional levels and setting common principles on Internet traffic exchange to prevent Internet traffic tromboning to decrease the transit cost and improve service quality”, the representative of APNIC stated that his organization has an interest and APNIC would be contributing in this area to the AP-IS Master Plan initiative.

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