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INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY OF  
THAILAND

World Telecommunications and Information Society Day 2012

17 May 2012, Bangkok

### OPENING SESSION

**Welcome Remarks and Delivery of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's WTISD 2012**

**Message, Dr. Xuan Zengpei, Director of IDD, ESCAP**

H.E. Mr. Woravat Auapinyakul,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you this morning for the celebration of the **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2012**.

I would like to begin by warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Woravat Auapinyakul, Minister Attached to the Prime Minister's Office. Excellency, your commitment through

your presence at this celebration is certainly a reflection of the deep commitment of your government towards ICT development and ICT regional cooperation. My warm thanks also go to ITU for this excellent chance of “UN Delivering as One”.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, we are here to celebrate the importance of ICTs to women’s empowerment and gender equality. At the same time, we recognize with heightened concern that the region remains beset by a digital divide that has widened in those very technologies that are at the cutting edge of transformations to knowledge-based societies and sustainable development. The digital divide is in fact several divides in one: geographic, ecological, income, education, age divides – and a gender divide that cuts across all these divides, meaning that women and girls have less access to the knowledge enhancing software applications and digital devices regardless of geographic location, level of income and age. To enable women and girls to enjoy equal access to, and equal benefits from, ICTs, we need to overcome the engendered digital divide through comprehensive policies that connect the development divides and address them through innovation.

To this end, across the region, countries and communities are developing initiatives to help ICT uptake by girls and women, to encourage gender parity, and the greater involvement of women in this important sector.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to inform you that for this important day, our Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon sent a special message. Now, I have the pleasure to deliver his message. I quote.

-----Quote-----

I welcome the focus on women and girls as the theme of this year's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Information and communications technologies are already benefiting women and girls in numerous ways. E-commerce is expanding opportunities for entrepreneurship. Mobile telephones are enabling midwives to make childbirth safer. Electronic social networks are allowing women around the world to mobilize as never before for democracy, dignity and human rights.

At the same time, we know that information and communications technology has the potential to cause harm. Cyberbullying, Internet-driven human trafficking and other abuses are often targeted at women and girls. We must do everything possible to stop these crimes and promote greater online security for all people.

More broadly, we should work to optimize the power of information and communications technology to support sustainable development. By gathering, disseminating and analyzing information, we can accelerate action to protect natural resources, combat climate change and help vulnerable people, including women and girls.

This is especially important in the context of the "Rio+20" United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held next month in Brazil. In the final run-up to the Conference, and then especially afterwards as we implement the decisions taken there, information and communications technology can make possible new approaches and solutions for a sustainable future.

On this World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, I call again for wide-ranging efforts to close both the digital divide and the gender gap. All people must be able to make the best use of information and communications technology to help create the future we want.

Ban Ki-Moon

UN Secretary-General

-----*Unquote*-----

Excellencies,

The words of the Secretary-General inspire us towards action. ESCAP is committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, and to the building of more sustainable development and just societies for all, women and men, girls and boys. In this, ICT is and will continue to be a tool – we must not let it become an obstacle.

Thank you.

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