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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Information and Communications Technology

Fourth session
Bangkok, 14-16 October 2014
Agenda item 11
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session

Draft report

Contents

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1.   Noting the need to close the digital divide through accelerated regional cooperation, the Committee requests that ESCAP continue to serve as the regional platform for intergovernmental cooperation in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) for sustainable development. In this regard, it requests that the role and capacity of the secretariat be strengthened in the area of ICT for development (ICTD).

2.   The Committee requests that the secretariat establish a multi-stakeholder working group on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, to develop principles and norms, as well as a master plan, covering both the policy and technical aspects of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway.

3.   The Committee requests that the secretariat continue working on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway in collaboration with international and regional partners, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) and the World Bank.

4.   The Committee notes with satisfaction the secretariat's ongoing activities aimed at mapping transnational ICT infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific and identifying missing ICT infrastructure links. The Committee requests that the secretariat enhance the maps of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, through partnerships with ITU and regional policy research institutions.

5.   The Committee notes the suggestion of the Republic of Korea that an Asia-Pacific information superhighway capacity development fund be set up, and further requests that ESCAP mobilize resources in order to enable further analysis of international connectivity and backbone networks at the subregional level, with a view towards developing potential network topologies, funding arrangements and implementation models.

6.   The Committee recommends that consideration should be given to amendments of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network so as to include cohabitation, as outlined in the outcomes of the Manila, Almaty and Paro expert consultations.

7.   The Committee further recommends that issues related to such amendments be dealt with through future meetings of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, as established under the respective agreements.

8.   The Committee encourages open access to passive communication infrastructure, including that to be deployed along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks.

9.   The Committee encourages the secretariat to create a database of pan-regional infrastructure projects with existing or future fibre co-deployment potential. This information could be integrated into the ESCAP/ITU online maps of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway.

10.   The Committee expresses support for the innovative approach of holding parallel sessions of two intergovernmental committees, with a joint

session aimed at strengthening an intersectoral approach to development challenges — as agreed by members and associate members of the Commission under recent reforms of the Commission's conference structure — and recommends pursuing this approach in future sessions of the Committee.

11.   The Committee expresses appreciation to the secretariat for its work to enhance the e-resilience of member States to disasters and recommends enhancing efforts to promote the sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned in ICT for disaster risk management and building such resilience.

12.   The Committee recommends that ESCAP continue providing support to the review of implementation of the targets set by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). This includes providing support for the measurement of international ICT-related development goals, particularly in least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, in cooperation with the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.

13.   The Committee recommends that the WSIS process and discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015 be mutually supportive. Any future ICT development targets should draw lessons from the WSIS experience. In particular, the next generation of targets should be more easily measurable, more frequently reviewed and more readily adaptable to rapid technological innovation.

II.   Summary of proceedings

A.   Asian Information Superhighway: seamless connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
(Agenda item 2)

14.   The Committee had before it a note by the secretariat entitled "Asian Information Superhighway: seamless connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/1), a note verbale dated 10 October 2014 from the Government of Bhutan (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/7), a note verbale dated 29 August 2014 from the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/6) and a note verbale dated 14 October 2014 from the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/8).

15.   The Committee benefited from a panel discussion that consisted of: Mr. Sanghun Lee, Director, Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning, Republic of Korea; Mr. Yeong Ro Lee, Special Adviser, National Information Society Agency, Republic of Korea; and Mr. Abu Saeed Khan, Senior Policy Fellow, LIRNEasia, Sri Lanka. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan; India; Japan; Kazakhstan; Pakistan; Philippines; and Russian Federation. A representative of the World Bank also made a statement. Thereafter, the secretariat made a brief presentation on Commission resolution 70/1 on implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific.

16.   The Committee commended the secretariat's work on the development of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway aimed at strengthening ICT infrastructure connectivity across the region. The Committee noted that weak inter-country connectivity, "tromboning" of

network traffic and high Internet price structures were significant hurdles to stronger connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, particularly in least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries. The Committee also noted that open access was a key regulatory component for lowering international bandwidth prices in the region.

17. The Committee agreed to the creation of a working group on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway so as to develop principles and norms, as well as a master plan, covering both policy and technical aspects of the superhighway.

18. The Committee took note of the importance of diverse technologies in enhancing inclusive outreach and e-resilience. The Committee recognized that there remained a pressing need for the region to take tangible measures to reduce the interregional and intraregional digital divide, and that coordinated efforts to implement global and regional commitments, including the WSIS outcomes, were critical.

19. The Committee took note of other regional and subregional initiatives that could support the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, including the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway, and acknowledged the role of public-private partnerships in furthering the progress of those initiatives.

20. The Committee recognized the importance of developing end-to-end hybrid infrastructure that incorporated ICT, rail, road and sea infrastructure, and took note of the benefits that could be reaped from utilizing the rights of way of transport networks. The Committee took note of the fact that deploying optical fibre along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks would lower the cost of ICT infrastructure deployment, enhance e-resilience and reduce the cost of international bandwidth in the region. The Committee also recognized the importance of ICT in supporting the development of smart infrastructure across all sectors and industries.

21. The Committee recognized that developing regional ICT infrastructure would require substantial financial resources, and that the private sector was expected to play a leading role in the development and application of ICT. In that regard, the Committee recognized the benefit of public-private partnerships in addressing the challenges associated with ICT connectivity.

22. The Committee noted with appreciation the progress of projects implemented by the secretariat in the areas of ICT connectivity, statistics and disaster mitigation, in particular the project aimed at expanding the connectivity of Central Asia through enhanced telecommunications infrastructure.

23. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts made by the Russian Federation to improve its satellite system and extend access, free of charge, to its Global Navigation Satellite System, which could be used for various disaster risk reduction and sustainable development purposes. The Committee also noted with appreciation the ongoing efforts of the Russian Federation to develop cooperation with other ESCAP member States.

24. The Committee noted the need for enhanced collaboration among major connectivity initiatives and other programmes initiated by the international development institutions, including the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway, Eurasian Connectivity Alliance, the United Nations Special Programme for the

Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme, aimed at harnessing cross-sectoral synergies by bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international organizations and thus addressing more effectively sustainability and developmental issues.

B.   Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies
(Agenda item 3)

25.   The Committee had before it a note by the secretariat entitled "Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies" (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/2 and E/ESCAP/CTR(4)/2), a note verbale dated 10 October 2014 from the Government of Bhutan (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/7), a note verbale dated 29 August 2014 from the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/6), and a note verbale dated 14 October 2014 from the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/8).

26.   The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for having created the conditions for cross-sectoral collaboration through the organization of the first joint session with the Committee on Transport.

27.   The Committee noted that, in building a terrestrial meshed network of fibre, there was a strong incentive to leverage synergies across infrastructure sectors, notably that of transport. The Committee noted that a number of good practices already existed in the ESCAP region, resulting in win-win outcomes, including additional revenues for the host utilities as well as cheaper and more extensive fibre deployment, which would contribute to improved access to ICT at national and regional levels.

28.   The Committee also noted the need to consider legislation at the national level to encourage open access to passive communication infrastructure, including that to be deployed along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks.

29.   To promote synergies between ICT, energy and transport infrastructures, the Committee recommended that consideration should be given to amendment of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, so as to include provisions for the co-deployment of fibre infrastructure along road and railway networks.

30.   The Committee further recommended that issues related to such amendments be dealt with through future meetings of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, as established under the respective agreements.

31.   The Committee was apprised of the important role that intelligent transport systems (ITS) could play in facilitation of international land transport, including border-crossing formalities. In that context, the Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the secretariat in developing the Secure Cross-Border Transport Model and the Model on Integrated Controls at Border-Crossings. In general, the Committee recognized the role of ITS in achieving sustainable development goals and furthering regional cooperation and connectivity.

32.   The Committee supported future collaboration between the secretariat and other development partners in ICT and development-related work.

C. **Measuring progress: the digital divide and review of targets of the World Summit on the Information Society**
(Agenda item 4)

33.   The Committee had before it the document entitled "Measuring progress: the digital divide and review of targets of the World Summit on the Information Society" (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/3).

34.   The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the work carried out by the secretariat on surveying the WSIS targets in the region and on performing a regional review of WSIS outcomes.

35.   The Committee noted the central role played by ICT in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the progress made by countries towards WSIS targets and action lines. The Committee further noted that mobile telephony, among other areas of progress, had transformed the ICT landscape in the past decade, creating beneficial economic impacts, access to finance and employment, as well as economic opportunities and investment. The Committee recognized that further progress still remained to be made as regards other aspects of WSIS targets, including ensuring the availability of relevant content in local languages and access to the Internet.

36.   The Committee recognized that ICT could be a catalytic driver for development, and it took note of the ICT and broadband strategies that had been adopted by several countries to support development objectives. These policies included plans to connect rural areas using fibre and other means. The Committee was informed that national ICT strategies often had a strong e-government component.

37.   The Committee called upon the region to take measures to reduce the interregional and intraregional digital divide. The Committee was of the view that further measures to reinforce international and regional cooperation in ICT were required, particularly in landlocked developing countries, to help drive down the cost of connectivity, which, in turn, would help meet international development objectives. In that respect, the Committee noted its appreciation for the technical assistance received by ESCAP and other international organizations to help bring down ICT prices and reinforce connectivity.

38.   The Committee noted the large disparities in data availability across the region, and requested that the secretariat provide increased assistance, in particular to least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, to strengthen their capacities for evidence-based policymaking in ICT. The Committee noted that the next of generation ICT development objectives would need to also consider the development impact of ICT in a more holistic and qualitative way. The Committee noted that such steps should include assessing usage, especially among vulnerable groups of society, impacts, especially on standards of living, as well as data safety and security.

D. **Regional capacity-building on information and communications technology for development**
(Agenda item 5)

39.   The Committee had before it the document entitled "Report of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its activities during the period 2012 to 2014" (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/4).

40.   The Committee benefited from a panel discussion on that theme. The panellists were: Ms. Maria Lourdes Aquilizan, Information Technology Officer, National ICT Competency Management, Information and Communications Technology Office, Philippines; Mr. Suresh Adhikari, Joint Secretary, Ministry of General Administration, Nepal; Mr. Asomiddin Atoev, Chairman, Association of Internet Service Providers, Tajikistan; and Mr. Yudho Suchahyo, Associate Professor, Faculty of Computer Science, University of Indonesia.

41.   During the discussion, the panellists shared information on how changes in the ICT landscape were being reflected in national ICT capacity-building programmes, and they identified priority and emerging areas for ICTD human capacity development at the regional, subregional and national levels. Each panellist also described the current ICTD capacity-building initiatives and utilization of the Academy and Primer Series programmes of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT).

42.   The panellists described critical success factors in promoting sustainability and institutionalization of ICTD capacity-building efforts. They noted that, in order to facilitate effective knowledge-sharing, networks of stakeholders as well as networks of resource persons needed to be developed; effective online and offline platforms for collaboration needed to be provided; and the collection and sharing of case studies needed to be prioritized. The panel highlighted areas in which further work was required, such as developing common ICTD competency standards for the region and prioritizing programme monitoring and evaluation.

43.   The Committee commended the programme of APCICT in the context of ICTD human and institutional capacity development and noted the positive impact of the Centre's work in the region.

44.   The representative of Bhutan highlighted the need to address the social and cultural impacts of ICT with a focus on government officials and people in media. In particular, he noted the need to develop capacity for formulating policies and developing a regulatory environment that would promote and strengthen the positive uses of social media and mitigate their misuse.

45.   The representative of India stated that capacity-building was a key pillar in the adoption of ICT, and that the APCICT capacity-building programmes should be promoted among countries in the region with the aim of identifying appropriate new partners to extend programme reach. She also stated that ICTD competency standards would complement the Asian Information Superhighway initiative.

46.   The representative of Bangladesh briefed the Committee on Vision 2021, for which his Government had adopted ICT as a priority for development. He noted that the capacity of all government officials to use social media should be developed.

47.   The representative of the Philippines stated that government chief information officers must be provided with capacity-building on the strategic use and management of information rather than on developing their technical capacities only, and that relevant capacity-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives should be provided in that regard.

48.   The representative of the Republic of Korea observed that leveraging ICT would continue to play a central role in ICTD, especially in the development agenda beyond 2015. He commended APCICT for the positive impact its programmes had made on the region.

E.   Information and communications technology as critical infrastructure for enhanced e-resilience and disaster risk management
(Agenda item 6)

49.   The Committee had before it the document entitled "Information and communications technology as critical infrastructure for enhanced e-resilience and disaster risk management" (E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/5). Statements were made by the representatives of Japan and the Russian Federation.

50.   The Committee took note of the essential role of ICT in promoting e-resilience and disaster risk management, in particular, the opportunities provided by using integrated ICTs to address the inclusion of marginalized communities, such as people with disabilities. Those systems should be linguistically appropriate and utilize emerging technologies, such as social media, to effectively apply the capacity of ICTs to enhance communication. The Committee also took note of the role that space technologies could play in disaster management, particularly when general public information and communications networks became congested and unreliable.

51.   The Committee noted that there remained a strong need to utilize ICTs in monitoring disasters, provide early warning systems and disseminate notifications to the communities affected. ICTs had an important role to play in integrating information from multiple sources to provide individuals and communities with customized information in a timely manner, particularly those who could have been marginalized in the past, such as persons with disabilities.

52.   The Committee noted that ICT networks used by general public networks were not always engineered with the desired levels of reliability and redundancy. Such measures as making extensive use of text message-based social media for disaster response could have a transformative effect on communications. Together with such steps, due regard should be given to backup networks for the delivery of emergency services, such as base transceiver stations, voice message delivery and backup networks with increased battery life and fuel capacity.

53.   In considering the relevance of ICT for disaster risk reduction and for building resilience to disasters, the Committee noted that there was a need to concentrate efforts towards the full implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and to take forward its outcomes in the development agenda beyond 2015.

54.   The Committee noted the ongoing studies on e-resilience that were being undertaken in collaboration with: the Information and Communications Technology Office, Department of Science and Technology, Philippines; LIRNEasia; and the University of the South Pacific. It recommended that good practices, lessons learned and policy implications should continue to enrich the sharing of experiences and strengthen policy formulation for e-resilience.

F. **Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme**
(Agenda item 7)

55. The secretariat presented an overview of the strategic framework for the biennium 2016-2017 as it related to the subprogramme on information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction and management, which served as the basis for the programme of work in those areas.

56. The secretariat also provided an overview of the ICT focus areas of the subprogramme, namely: regional connectivity for affordable, reliable and universal access to ICT; enhanced e-resilience and disaster risk management; regional practices, norms and policies related to the Asia-Pacific information superhighway; and human and institutional capacity-building in ICT for development. The Committee observed that the focus areas were in line with the strategic framework that had been endorsed by the Commission.

G. **Consideration of possible draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-first session**
(Agenda item 8)

57. No draft resolutions were recommended for submission to the Commission at its seventy-first session.

H. **Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the fifth session of the Committee**
(Agenda item 9)

58. The Committee agreed that its next session would be held in Bangkok during the fourth quarter of 2016.

I. **Other matters**
(Agenda item 10)

59. No other matters were discussed.

J. **Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session**
(Agenda item 11)

60. The Committee adopted the report on its fourth session on 16 October 2014.

K. **Closing of the session**
(Agenda item 11)

61. The fourth session of the Committee was closed on 16 October 2014.

III. Organization of the session

A. **Opening, duration and organization**

62. The Committee on Information and Communications Technology held its fourth session in Bangkok from 14 to 16 October 2014. It was declared open by Mr. Somboon Mekpaiboonwattana, Vice Minister of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand, following his keynote address. Opening remarks were delivered by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and Mr. Louis Napoleon Corpus Casambre, Undersecretary and Executive Director, Information and Communications Technology Office, Department of Science and Technology of the Philippines.

B. Attendance

63.   The session was attended by representatives of the following members and associated members of ESCAP: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; India; Indonesia; Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tuvalu; and Uzbekistan. The session was also attended by the representatives of the following States: Germany; Morocco; and South Africa.

64.   Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Labour Organization; International Telecommunication Union; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and the World Bank.

65.   The following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations were represented: Asian-Pacific Postal Union; Asian Institute of Technology; Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh; Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation; Commonwealth Centre for Electronic Governance, India; Muslim World League; National Council of Women of Thailand; Nextep Strategy Inc.; Levering Ltd.; Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting; LIRNEasia; David Butcher and Associates; and Terabit Consulting.

C. Election of officers

66.   The following officers were elected:

Chair:	Mr. Louis Casambre (Philippines)
Vice-Chairs:	Mr. Meas Po (Cambodia)
	Mr. Manruk Reshan Dewapura (Sri Lanka)
	Mr. Fikrat Pashayev (Azerbaijan)

D. Agenda

67.   The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1.   Opening of the session.

2.   Asian Information Superhighway: seamless connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

3.   Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies.

4.   Measuring progress: the digital divide and review of targets of the World Summit on the Information Society.

5.   Regional capacity-building on information and communications technology for development.

6.   Information and communications technology as critical infrastructure for enhanced e-resilience and disaster risk management.

7.   Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme.

8.   Consideration of possible draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-first session.

9.   Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the fifth session of the Committee.

10. Other matters.

11. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session.

12. Closing of the session.

Annex

List of documents

Document symbol	Document title	Agenda item
General series		
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/1	Asian Information Superhighway: seamless connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific	2
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/2– E/ESCAP/CTR(4)/2	Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies	3
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/3	Measuring progress: the digital divide and review of targets of the World Summit on the Information Society	4
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/4	Report of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its activities during the period 2012-2014	5
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/5	Information and communications technology as critical infrastructure for enhanced e-resilience and disaster risk management	6
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/6	Note verbale dated 29 August 2014 from the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/7	Note verbale dated 10 October 2014 from the Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/8	Note verbale dated 14 October 2014 from the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
Limited series		
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/L.2	Draft report	11
Information series		
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/INF/1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/INF/2	List of participants	
E/ESCAP/CICT(4)/INF/3	Tentative programme	

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