Asia-Pacific Regional Development Forum 2015 (ASP-RDF-2015)
21-22 August 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

ITU Regional Development Forum

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The ITU (International Telecommunication Union) Regional Development Forum (RDF) for Asia and the Pacific was held successfully during 21-22 August 2015 at Hotel Plaza Athenee in Bangkok, Thailand with the theme 'Smartly Digital AsiaPacific'. The Forum was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), hosted by the Ministry of Information, and Communication Technology, Thailand (MICT) and supported by the Department of Communications, Australian Government. Over 100 participants from 28 countries including representatives of ITU Member States, ITU Sector Members, UN Agencies, Regional and International Organizations, Industry, Academia, Others joined the Regional Development Forum.

Opening Session Brahima Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau during his welcome remarks thanked the host, partners and welcomed all the participants to the meeting. He emphasized on RDF being the platform to brief Members annually on the progress made in the region following the priorities identified during the World Telecommunication Development Conference, especially the Regional Initiatives. It is also a platform to gather new priorities, strengthen partnerships and to seek guidance on how ITU could better assist in the ICT development.

Areewan Haorangsi, Secretary General, Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) during her welcome remarks emphasized on the close relationship between the APT and the ITU in assisting members. She thanked the Government of Thailand for the kind invitation and hosting and called for working together towards the progress of ICT development in the region. Songporn Komolsuradej, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand gave the opening remarks. She welcomed all the participants to the meeting. She thanked the ITU for the trust and continued support to Members in the region. She recalled

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the outcomes of the successful Connect Asia-Pacific Summit 2013 held in Bangkok and its contribution to the WTDC-14. Komolsuradej mentioned that the Asia-Pacific Regional Development Forum 2015 is a good opportunity to review the development progress as regards the outcome of the 2013 Summit and especially the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives under the Dubai Action Plan adopted at the WTDC-2014.

Session 1
ASIA-PACIFIC ICT DEVELOPMENT 2011

The speakers briefed the participants on the overall achievement of the Regional Initiatives for Asia-Pacific adopted by the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 as well as introduced five new Regional Initiatives for Asia Pacific adopted by the WTDC 2014 for next four year of cycle. The session informed the participants on the Regional Initiatives on Unique ICT needs for least developed countries (LDCs), Small Island developing States (SIDS) and Emergency Telecommunications elaborating the key partnerships fostered and assistances rendered to the countries in Asia-Pacific region. It also Shared the outcomes of implementation of Regional Initiative on Digital Broadcasting where 24 countries from the Asia-Pacific region ▶

were assisted. The panel presented the outcomes of the survey report to assess the impact of implementation of Regional Initiative on Broadband Access and Uptake in Urban and Rural areas where 16 National Broadband Plans and Wireless Broadband Master Plans were prepared for countries in Asia-Pacific. The session also informed the participants of the outcomes of implementation of 'Regional Initiative on Telecommunications/ICT Policy and Regulation in the Asia Pacific Region' and shared the strategy for implementation for next cycle of WTDC 2014

Session 2
SMARTLY DIGITAL ASIA PACIFIC: THE NEXT FOUR YEARS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The session briefed the participants on the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 including the ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives, the Strategic plan of the ITU (2016-2019) and the timelines to the next world conferences including the next WTDC; The session also informed the participants on the M Powering, Smart Sustainable Development Model and ITU Academy initiatives launched in 2012, the objectives of the these initiatives and the progress made; • It emphasized on the need for using ICT as an empowerment tool and the importance of enhancing broadband access, appropriate content creation and its application. The experiences of the ITU Asia-Pacific Centers of Excellence for 2007-2014 period and progress made since the launch of the new CoE strategy in 2015 was also shared with the Forum participants.

Session 3
SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, INCLUDING PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES, AND LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

A number of initiatives and plans especially in the Pacific region were informed and updated to the participants. The outcome of the Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting held in Tonga in Jun 2015 was informed to the participants. Member countries, international and regional organizations sought more close cooperation and coordination in formulating and implementing projects and initiatives in the Pacific thereby effectively utilizing the limited resources while avoiding duplications. The special and unique needs of SIDS, LLDCs, and LDCs, international organizations were requested to ensure enough and sustainable resources for assistance in telecommunications/ICT development in the countries. While connectivity is being put in place in the Pacific, ICT applications and services including e-Government are further focus of governments to promote the ICT uptake in countries.

Session 4
EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

A number of ITU activities/assistance in response to disasters such as in Philippines and Nepal, were informed to the participants Many Asia-Pacific countries are prone to national disasters while there are still lacking capacity in term of disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and relief. It was emphasized that telecommunications and ICTs especially broadband play a very important role in life saving and in all phases of disaster management. However, governments are not well equipped with necessary tools including policy and plan for disaster communication management (i.e. emergency telecommunications). ITU, as leading agency in telecommunications/ICTs, is requested to continue its leading role in emergency telecommunications and assist its member countries in developing a comprehensive National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP).

Session 5
HARNESSING THE BENEFITS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New ICT technologies have great impact on the lives of individuals, industries and society as smart cities and smart nations are on the rise in the Asia Pacific region. The region's socioeconomic and urban growth comes with environmental, social, resources, safety and security pressure and deployment of smart networks provides forms an important part of solution. The speakers and participants also recognized the need and discussed the means to overcome the digital divide, build digital capabilities and boost innovation through local entrepreneurs.

Use of telecom/ ICT networks especially the Internet for socio-economic development in various areas including health, education, agriculture etc. are on the rise. Affordability and relevance of local content is important to harness the full benefits. The sector is seeing increasing growth of data traffic, and shift in revenues and usage from voice to data. Technological solutions such as big data, Internet of Things, LTE, 5G, Small Cells, Millimeter wave amongst others are becoming important to manage the surge in usage demand in terms of scale and scope. Scalability of network, lowering the costs per bit, sharing infrastructure, reducing latency, ensure upgradeability and high quality of service are becoming important consideration for growth, sustainability and affordability needs.

IPv4 to IPv6 transition is becoming critical for business continuity of network service providers and the growth of the Internet infrastructure and services, and there is a further need to accelerate deployment of IPv6.

Harnessing the benefits of new ▶

technologies requires action by all stakeholders to create the appropriate enabling environment. Developing a modern regulatory approach is required to embrace smart society including issues such as spectrum management and harmonization; policy and regulatory frameworks including those from other sectors such as city authority, utility, public safety authorities etc.

The participants discussed the importance to have flexibility and agility in policy and regulatory framework in sustainable society and a more active role of service providers in driving digital society, smart cities etc. There is a need for collaboration of policies across the value chain as well as to hold joint dialogue within the telecom/ICT sector stakeholders and across other sector policy makers and regulators (e.g. health, education, agriculture).

There is a large investment estimated in the telecom/ ICT networks in the coming years and it is important to be wise and intelligent in targeting these investments.

Session 6

DEVELOPMENT OF BROADBAND ACCESS AND ADOPTION OF BROADBAND

The session stressed the need to have national broadband policies and enabling environment to bring opportunities and empowerment through education and encouraging investment in broadband infrastructure. The Forum emphasized on the role of leadership for adoption of national broadband policies , encouraging competition and supporting public private partnership. Spectrum is considered as oxygen for narrowing the digital divide and dynamic spectrum allocation for affordability of broadband. Digital society is about interaction between governments, businesses and citizens via digital technologies Mobile broadband is fastest technology promoting affordable access to broadband. The case study of Pakistan is an example where financial inclusion , education and universal access are key areas for attention of policy makers There is a need to have enabling policy and regulatory framework for digital societies generating social benefits leveraging the power of ICTs.

The Forum recognized the need for cross sectorial collaboration in particular health sector by using the power of ICT for deployment of cost-effective e health services in rural and remote areas, thereby reducing operational and administrative and stressing the need of partnership. The role of ICTs for developing e Agriculture Strategies in Asia-Pacific is important to empowering farmers to enhance productivity and socio-economic development.

Session 7

POLICY AND REGULATION

Speakers shared and discussed policy and regulatory initiatives undertaken in Cambodia, Pakistan and the Philippines linking them to the objectives and outcomes related to the ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative on Policy and Regulation as adopted by

WTDC 2014. Some policy intervention initiatives to promote national development objectives were shared e.g. TVWS for Social and Economic Development. The Session discussed the need for regulators to consider moving towards Regulation 4.0: on collaborative regulation. The Session recommended that the ITU continue to assist countries in the Region, particularly developing countries to enhance policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and availability of adequate skills in the areas of policy and regulation. The Session thanked and urged the ITU to continue providing a platform for policy makers and regulators that fosters dynamic and strategic discussions, sharing of information, real experiences and practices and identify possible solutions and opportunities for potential collaboration to address emerging regulatory issues and challenges.

Session 8

DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The session expressed concern that globally, more than 2.5 billion adults, mostly in developing economies, are considered 'financially excluded' as they do not access to basic financial services such as formal account at a financial institution and operate almost entirely in cash. The speakers shared some innovative ICT policy and regulatory solutions to promote financial inclusion. The Forum acknowledged that mobile money can be a game changer for people of limited income and an enabler for financial inclusion in developing countries. The recent growth of digital financial services has allowed millions of people who are otherwise excluded from the formal financial system to perform financial transactions relatively cheaply, securely, and reliably.

It is important to continue the debate and information sharing on this very important concern.

Session 9

ROUNDTABLE ON 'IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNECT ASIA PACIFIC SUMMIT 2013 IN THE CONTEXT OF SMARTLY DIGITAL ASIA-PACIFIC

Chairperson Ioane Koroivuki, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific presented the IT Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative (2015 2017) objectives, expected results and some project proposals. He invited Members and partners to join in its implementation.

CLOSING SESSION

The ITU Asia Pacific Regional Development Forum ended successfully with closing remarks from Ioane Koroivuki, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and Songporn Komolsuradej, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology ▣