



**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)**

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

ASIA-PACIFIC TELECOMMUNITY (APT)

**15th Meeting of the Regional Interagency Working Group on
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

02 December 2011

Bangkok

**Opening Statement by
Dr. Xuan Zengpei
Director**

**Information and Communications Technology and
Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD), ESCAP**

Dr Eun-Ju KIM, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Mr Kraisorn PORNSUTEE, Deputy-Secretary-General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity; Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Regional Interagency Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

At the outset, I would like to express our condolences and shock at the flood devastation that we witnessed since mid-October 2011 in

different parts of Thailand including some parts of Bangkok. This flood had killed more than 600 people and had made huge economic loss in Thailand. There are considerable losses to ICT sectors as well. It's important for us as key stakeholders for disaster management in the region to position our strategy in such a way that we are more helpful to our member Countries in such crisis situation. Inter-agency Working Group meeting at this backdrop provides an opportunity to learn from the experiences we had and move forward.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

In fact, the Asia-Pacific region is home to about 61 per cent of the world's population, and has suffered from 50 per cent of the world's major natural disasters. For instance, the region has recorded 70 per cent of the world's earthquakes measuring 7 or more on the Richter scale. During the last decade, more than 200 million people were affected by natural disasters in the region. Of the World total the region included 90% of those affected by natural disasters, 65% of deaths due to natural disasters, and 38% of economic damage from natural disasters between 2001 and 2010. People in low-income countries were largely affected by and died annually due to natural disasters during 2001 to 2010. As such, a

substantial amount of resources that could be used for overall socio-economic development and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have to be diverted to disaster response and recovery activities. In 2011, the region suffered further by such natural disasters including the unprecedented floods in Thailand and its neighbouring countries, and also in Australia; and large scale earthquake and tsunami in Japan, among others.

Disaster emergency communication capacities are critical for timely dissemination of early warnings of approaching major hazards, for immediate reporting of disaster occurrence, and for effective organizing and coordinating response actions. The extraordinary growth of commercialized mobile cellular and broadband networks, including satellite-based ones, has provided the technical and infrastructure bases for the establishment of such capacities more accessible than years ago. In addition, multi-stakeholder and public-private partnerships approaches may make the establishment more affordable and sustainable.

In this regard, the 14th meeting of the Regional Interagency Working Group on ICT held at UNCC, Bangkok on 11 August 2010 agreed for the establishment of Asia-Pacific Regional Platform for Disaster Communications Management and Capacities as an important area for

regional interagency cooperation and for building multi-stakeholders and public-private-partnership. The meeting recommended to develop project concept notes and explore the possibility of funding resources, and to build linkages with the private sectors and donors. My colleagues from ESCAP, ITU and APT will be presenting later some progress in this direction.

Additionally, ESCAP will be briefly presenting its ongoing activities related to ICT for Development and ICT for Disaster Risk Reduction right after the Break. I hope that some of these activities will be of interest to other organizations present here today and that perhaps we can collaborate in some of them.

Finally, I would like to thank our friends in ITU/ROAP, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity and colleagues representing other UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations and other partners for your continued cooperation and support given to the work of the Regional Interagency Working Group on ICT since its establishment in 2001. I am sure that this meeting will be beneficial for our future joint activities towards building a disaster-resilient and knowledge-based society in the Asia-Pacific region. This will, ultimately contribute to inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development and the accomplishment of the internationally

agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals
in our region.

I wish you all the success in your deliberations.

Thank you.