

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

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

ASIA-PACIFIC TELECOMMUNITY (APT)

Eleventh Meeting of the Regional Interagency Working Group on Information and
Communication Technologies (ICT)

25 February 2008

Bangkok

Opening Remarks by Mr Siva Thampi, Director, ICSTD

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Eleventh Meeting of the Regional Interagency Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). At the outset, I would like to thank you for the continuous cooperation and support you have given to the work of the Regional Interagency Working Group since its establishment.

First of all, I would like to warmly welcome the new Secretary General of the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Mr. Toshiyuki Yamada who has assumed this important office recently. I also welcome Mr. Kraisor Pornsutee, the new Deputy Secretary General of APT, who has done a lot for ICT in Thailand as the former Permanent Secretary of the Thai ICT Ministry. Mr. Yamada, Mr. Kraisor, we certainly look forward to working with you in constructively advancing the interagency agenda in the years ahead.

In recognition of his hard work and dedication to ICT for the region, I would also like to pay tribute to, Mr. Amarendra Narayan, former Secretary-General of APT particularly, for being one of the architects in initiating and promoting closer interagency collaboration.

Let me also warmly welcome Mr. Sameer Sharma, Senior Advisor, IP and Partnerships from ITU.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Geneva Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society highlighted the importance of the regional dimensions of the Information Society. The Summit assigned to the Regional Commissions the task of moderating and facilitating the implementation of action line C11, International and regional cooperation, of the WSIS Plan of Action.

Five years have passed since the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society concluded in Geneva in 2003. Regional implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit is vitally important for Asia and the Pacific. We might want to think about what the regional stakeholders want to do to assess where the region stands in its implementation and what regional events to organize for WSIS+5.

I should mention that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is mandated to serve as a regional platform for deliberations through General Assembly resolutions 60/1 on the “2005 World Summit Outcome” and 57/270 on “Integrated and coordinated implementations of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic and social fields”, as well as Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 on “Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the UN in the economic and social fields”. As part of a regional process that bridges global and national efforts, member States would share at the coming 64th Session of ESCAP lessons learned and insights gained from country-level implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major global conferences, including the WSIS. This could, in short, be the first regional event organized for WSIS+5.

Indeed, at this juncture, I might add that as follow-up to the first phase and preparation for the second phase of WSIS, UNESCAP, in cooperation with ITU and UNDP-APDIP, organized a number of sub-regional conferences in 2004 and 2005. Those events were aimed at reflecting sub-regional perspectives and specific needs of sub-regional countries in the Regional Action Plan. ESCAP secretariat conducted sub-region-specific surveys on the Information Society with the objectives of exploring participants’ views on the possibility of achieving the WSIS Plan of Action targets in their countries by 2015. In conducting the sub-regional surveys, questionnaires were distributed which compared all 11 targets mentioned in paragraph six of the WSIS Plan of Action against various levels of achievement. For possible consideration, we may wish, therefore, to further pursue and expand on that exercise as one of several inputs to any WSIS+5 event.

And possibly, as an overarching theme for WSIS+5, the impact of ICT on climate change could be examined – from both the negative and mitigating standpoints. In addressing climate change, and the fact that the UN General Assembly seeks to advance climate change action on various fronts and through meaningful cooperation across the UN system and concerned stakeholders, it may be timely and relevant to try to have a better understanding on how information, communication and space technologies have contributed to the problem and how those technologies can be leveraged to mitigate it.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangkok will be buzzing with activity this coming September as the city hosts the leading ICT Exhibition and Forum, Telecom Asia 2008, organized by ITU. In addition to showcasing Asia-Pacific latest ICT innovations, it will be a major networking platform for ICT players from across the Asia-Pacific region. Telecom Asia will also host a high-level Forum that will explore and debate key areas central to the growth of the Asia-Pacific telecommunication industry.

Indeed, and I am very grateful to Dr. Kim of ITU for the proposal put forward last week at the Regional Coordination Meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN and attended by some 20 UN bodies and agencies, of having a “One UN Pavilion” at the Telecom Asia. In my view, this would be an excellent opportunity to show that we are really working as one family in the ICT field.

Pacific Connectivity, hopefully, will be one of the areas where we are delivering as one. UNESCAP has over a number of years assessed the state of connectivity in the Pacific as well as the requisite socio-economic, technical and institutional backdrop for making progress on improved connectivity for the Pacific states. This is based partly on a diversity of work by UN family members, and others, on the current high potential for benefit if

appropriate steps are taken. We will discuss current and futures initiatives regarding Pacific Connectivity, and possible ways of inter-agency collaboration. We anticipate that others in the UN system may like to contribute to such discussion, and ESCAP will endears facilitate this.

I am confident that this meeting, with your valuable contributions, will come up with concrete outcomes towards closer cooperation in the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS and the Regional Action Plan in building an information and knowledge-based society in the region.

I wish the Meeting all success.