



Thailand hosts regional conference exploring how open standards can help achieving interoperability in e-Government implementation

Delegates discuss the role of open standards in promoting visionary electronic government policy

BANGKOK, May 3, 2006 . . . Delegates from Asian government, academia, civil society, private industry, and international organizations gathered here in a conference jointly organized by Thailand Ministry of Science and Technology, leading industry partners, in cooperation with UNDP-APDIP., to discuss how to better achieve successful ICT implementation (such as e-government programs) through the adoption of open standards.

The consensus was that recent advances have enabled government to get serious about adopting technology that enables them to affordably access vital public records, and to exchange information with sister municipalities, far into the future -- especially as the data moves off the traditional PC desktop to the Web and to new computer devices.

Many guest speakers emphasized the importance of open standards to foster communication and collaboration, promote interoperability, as well as encourage innovation. Open standards place users, not vendors, in control, by enabling choice and flexibility in ICT solutions and thus enable users to scale up or integrate their system with others more effectively. One example of open standards cited during the conference was the Open Document Format, ODF, which is a file format for office documents expressed in XML, describing the content and formatting of a document, now being adopted by many vendors and certified by ISO. Other technologies that encourage interoperability between diverse computing platforms were also discussed, such as Service Oriented Architecture (SOA).

Government delegates, such as those in attendance from Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, India, Laos PDR, and Philippines, are now better equipped, as they return to their countries, to recommend technical and policy approaches based on open technologies. Attendees shared ideas for implementing architectures, open ecosystems, procurement and legislative policies, innovations, skills sets, intellectual property reform based on open computing environment.

Two policy dialog sessions were held between participants representing a dozen national governments, academia, international and regional organizations, industry and media. Participants of the policy dialog discussed open standards and the benefits relating to open standards, and how best to promote their use through procurement policy and establishing interoperable open ICT ecosystems. Participants are committed to studying the open standards policies and practices and their impacts, specifically in the Asian context. Some of the preliminary ideas for ways forward included the development of national and regional interoperability frameworks based on open standards.

“Open standards prevent vendor lock-in, levels the playing field and promote competition. They enable users to reduce risk when investing in emerging technologies and preserve freedom of action. They promote interoperability to enhance efficiency and service levels in the Public Sector. Open standards provide a healthy evolution of the ICT marketplace and allow citizens a choice of technology or platforms when accessing e-government applications. I truly believe that open standards have an important role in our changing world and the ensuing innovative possibilities these changes present for Thailand and all nations. We have an opportunity to use and promote open standards to take a leadership position in innovation and the global economy. We need to work collectively to build collaborative ecosystems, lowering of barriers to the flow of information and innovation. Open standards

permit this freer flow of information, allowing diverse systems to “interoperate” in a meaningful way.” said Dr. Thaweesak Koanantakool, Director, National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, National Science and Technology Development Agency, Thailand.

"IBM applauds the important work accomplished during these past few days at the conference," said Dr. Robert Sutor, Vice President of Standards and Open Source at IBM Corporation. "It is encouraging to see so much interest in taking all the recent advances in open standards, such as with the Open Document Format, and applying it to real-life policy."

"Oracle is impressed by the level of interest, participation and activity in the area of open standards," said Dr. Donald Deutsch, Vice President of Standards Strategy and Architecture at Oracle. "Clearly governments around the world now recognize the importance of open standards and this conference demonstrated Thailand's leadership in the region on this issue."

About the Regional Conference on Open Standards: The Key to an Open ICT Ecosystem

The "Regional Conference on Open Standards: The Key to an Open ICT Ecosystem" was organized by National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), a research arm under the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), Ministry of Science and Technology, with support from leading technology partners – IBM, Intel, Oracle, Cisco. The organizer also received cooperation from the Asia-Pacific Development Information Program (APDIP), which is an initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in organizing the policy dialog session to discuss issues and ways to promote adoption and use of open standards more widely. Participants of the dialogue are representatives from government, industry, academia, and civil society.

The objectives of this conference are to create awareness and understanding of the importance of open standards, and to bring together representatives from government, industry, academia, and civil society, to discuss pragmatic ways to promote adoption and use of truly open standards and how to build an open ICT ecosystem.

The event was built on a roadmap created last year at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at the Harvard Law School in the United States, in which Asian countries were prominent among 13 participating countries that discussed and linked open technology standards to economic development, efficiency, growth and innovation.

The Asia-Pacific Development Information Program is one of the members of the ODF Alliance , an organization which educates governments about the benefits of using software based on open standards. Launched with 35 members, the Alliance membership now numbers more than 150 within one month of its founding, and spans academia, advocacy groups, vendors and technical organizations in more than 30 countries

Related Websites:

Campaign for Open Standards in Thailand:	http://open.giti.nectec.or.th
Regional Conference on Open Standards:	http://open.giti.nectec.or.th/conference2006
NECTEC	http://www.nectec.or.th/english/
UNDP/APDIP International Open Source Network	http://www.iosn.net
ODF Alliance	http://odfalliance.org
Harvard Roadmap at Berkman Center:	http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/epolicy/roadmap.pdf

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