



# **Asian Forum on Information and Communication Technology Policies and e-Strategies**

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Welcome Remarks

by



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Programme Coordinator, UNDP-APDIP

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*Yang Berhormat Datuk Amar Leo Moggie,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished Country Delegates and Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

On behalf of the entire team of UNDP's Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme, and on my own behalf, let me wish you all a great big welcome to Kuala Lumpur and to this Forum on ICT Policies and e-Strategies. When we started making preparations for this Forum 2-3 months ago, we had no idea that we would be able to attract such an august audience, and in the numbers that we have here. I suppose it just goes to show the tremendous interest that exists here in the region to remain current on matters as they relate to ICT policies and e-strategies. It is not without reason that the 2001 Human Development Report states "Policy, not charity, will determine whether new technologies become a tool for human development everywhere."

Policies and strategies are not static, one-off exercises that, once developed, can go on being implemented forever. They are dynamic tools that must continuously be up-dated to keep up with local, international, and technological developments. Over the past several years, Singapore, for instance, has moved on from issuing a National Computerisation Plan (1980-1985), to a National IT Plan (NITP, 1986-1991), to an IT 2000 plan (1992-1999), to Infocomm (1999-2003), and this year it released a new strategic plan called "Connected Singapore".

While policies and strategies are imperatives to national interests, they are also not restricted to national borders. Another example of successful policy-making in the region that is worth noting comes from the Pacific Island Countries which, in 2002, together came out with the "Pacific Islands ICT Policy and Strategic Plan (PIIP)" - one of the few examples of successful regional policy-making anywhere in the world.

As we meet here to discuss the 'why', the 'what', the 'for whom', and so on, of e-policies and e-strategies, UNDP is assisting countries as far a field as Afghanistan and Lao PDR, to Maldives and Vietnam, to formulate their respective policies and strategies. For them, and for us, this Forum could not have come at a better time.

In supporting countries in the Asia Pacific, UNDP-APDIP relies heavily on South-South cooperation. We have amongst us here today countries that the 2001 UNDP Human Development Report, "Making New Technologies Work for Humankind", has described as "leaders", "potential leaders", "dynamic adopters", and "marginalized".

The "leaders" are at the cutting edge of technological innovation. The "potential leaders" have diffused old technologies widely, but innovated little. "Dynamic adopters" have important hi-tech hubs, but in which diffusion of old technologies is incomplete. In "marginalised" countries, diffusion of even old technologies and skill-building have a long way to go. The UNDP Report identified three Asia-Pacific countries as being leaders; two as potential leaders; seven as dynamic adopters; and two as marginalised. The remainder of the Asia-Pacific countries (-and the report lists 13 others) do not even make it to any of the above-noted categories.

As we can see clearly from these ratings, the 42 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region are at various stages of the development scale. They all have their own unique requirements. This necessitates the need for a tailor-made approach to policy- and strategy-formulation in each of these countries.

And this is precisely what UNDP tries and does by bringing together specialists from the different categories of countries described above, to help each other, and by arranging study visits and the like.

Such South-South, regional co-operation goes a long way towards meeting the regions needs, for not everybody outside of the region itself necessarily understands or appreciates the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, and political economic dynamics of the region - what makes the region what it is. Hence, we are hopeful that this Forum will also give an opportunity for the countries present here today, and there are over 20 of them, to strike partnerships and work with each other in the future on the road to becoming "leaders" and "potential leaders" one day. And UNDP-APDIP is here to assist in any way it can, to help you achieve your goals.

With this, let me, once again, wish everyone a warm welcome and I look forward to fruitful discussions over the next three days in the hope that at the end of the day, we can all come

out of this Forum with one common vision on how together we can take this entire region forward in this new century.

Thank you