

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

Regional Workshop on Capacity Building in Public Policy Issues of Internet
Use for Business Development in Asia and the Pacific
18-20 October 2006
Bangkok, Thailand

**MESSAGE OF MR. KIM HAK-SU,
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ESCAP**

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to convey to you all the warm greetings and message of Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, who is traveling on other urgent business.

The message reads as follows and I quote:

"It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the Regional Workshop on Capacity Building in Public Policy Issues of Internet Use for Business Development in Asia and the Pacific organized by ESCAP in close cooperation with UNDP-APDIP.

As you are aware, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), primarily, the Internet has enabled people to have unlimited access to information, knowledge and services. The Internet can also enable solution-sharing among local people and communities. It provides access to practical information on such matters as small-sized business accounting, weather trends or best farming practices. It can further provide developing countries with access to new markets and new sources of competitive advantage to boost income growth.

The current information revolution has also transformed the way modern businesses are conducted. The Internet has especially evolved into a key tool and venue for conducting trade through electronic commerce (e-Commerce). As a venue, it does away with the limits of geography, time zones and in some cases, the need for a physical office. In addition, it facilitates global connectivity, resulting in new ways of creating and delivering products and services on a global scale.

The use of the Internet enhances the role that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) play in national economic development strategies, especially, in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in Asia and the Pacific. It does so by facilitating flows of information, capital, ideas, people, and products

towards creating more job opportunities, increasing public revenue and raising the general standard of living.

The vital role of the Internet for the Information Society was well recognized by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in two phases in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005. As you may be aware, WSIS established at the highest political level a common vision and understanding of an inclusive, development and people-centered Information Society. It further declared that the Internet was a central element of the emerging information society and had an important role to play in attaining the targets set forth in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is not surprising, therefore, that a focus of discussion at the Tunis phase was Internet Governance.

The Tunis phase stressed that the existing arrangements for Internet Governance had worked effectively to make the Internet a highly robust, dynamic and geographically diverse. At the same time, it was recognized that there were many cross-cutting international public policy issues that were not adequately addressed by the current mechanism. Therefore, the United Nations Secretary-General was invited to convene a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue known as the Internet Governance Forum.

The Tunis phase also pointed out the need for enhanced cooperation to enable governments to carry out, on an equal footing, their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. It also called upon the organizations responsible for essential tasks associated with the Internet to contribute to creating an environment that facilitates this development of public policy principles.

In general, Asia and the Pacific features well in terms of Internet penetration. Last year there were nearly 400 million Internet subscribers and perhaps as many as one billion regular Internet users worldwide. Asia and the Pacific contributed the highest share, with around one-third of the world's total online population, and more than 40 per cent of the world's broadband users. Several of the fastest growing Internet economies were in the region, notably China and India which together account for over 170 million users. However, Internet penetration rates in many countries in the region remain a fraction of the rates of developed countries. They are particularly low in rural and remote areas.

Prior to the WSIS in Tunis, ESCAP and UNDP-APDIP had initiated regional consultations on Internet Governance, the outcome of which was presented to the WSIS process as this region's contribution to the global discussions. One of the findings of the regional consultations was that many governments do not have the capacity and understanding of Internet development issues and especially public policy issues of Internet Governance. Therefore, over the past years, ESCAP has been actively involved in assisting its developing members in Internet development, especially through capacity-building in ICT public policy issues.

This Regional Workshop is a continuation of ESCAP's efforts in supporting capacity building of its members.

In order to address the above challenges and problems, the Regional Workshop aims to discuss and develop a set of training modules on the use of Internet for business development. The modules will serve as a reference, principally, for Internet policy makers, and implementers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in Asia and the Pacific. The modules will provide guidance on the various legislative/ policy issues and options that, especially, encourage small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to take advantages of the Internet to actively participate in the global and national markets. The outcome of the workshop will also be reported to the forthcoming Internet Governance Forum in Athens, Greece. Eventually, the modules will be further used for national training activities in selected participating countries.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am fully confident that the Regional Workshop and the national training to follow, which focus on how to use digital opportunity provided by the Internet for the development of the private sector and especially SMEs, will come up with concrete outcomes for furthering social and economic development of the participating countries.

I wish you every success in your deliberations."

Unquote.
