UN-ESCWA

Workshop on
ICT Policy Making in ESCWA Member Countries
Beirut, 2-4 May 2006

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION NOTE

1. Introduction

The WSIS recommendations include proposals to launch strategies at national and regional levels, focusing on a number of areas, including universal access to information, affordable information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and services, and an enabling environment based on clear policies, laws and regulations, as expressed in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action.

To activate the execution of WSIS recommendation, the United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Regional Commissions, UNDP and UNCTAD are committed for the execution of the project "Capacity-Building for ICT policy-making". The main goal of the project is to provide technical assistance and advisory services to decision makers from United Nations Member States, in particular developing countries and countries with economy in transition, in order to develop comprehensive and sustainable ICT-for-development policies and effectively integrate them into overall national development programmes and strategies. Additionally, the project aims at establishing a network of ICT stakeholders and policy makers for knowledge-sharing on ICT policy-related issues. This network will promote bilateral, regional, and international cooperation, in particular South-South cooperation.

Most of the countries in the ESCWA region are fulfilling WSIS recommendations concerning the formulation of ICT strategies or e-strategies. Moreover, some countries have taken great strides in transforming their societies to information societies, while others have taken their first steps towards that end, and others still are facing basic challenges posed by insufficient ICT infrastructure.

2. Objectives

This workshop aims at contributing to streamlining the process of building an integrated knowledge society in accordance with the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It will provide decision makers in the region with a framework and a guide for the design and development of national strategies aimed at the realization and advancement of the information society and knowledge-based economies, the implementation of such strategies and the evaluation of their impact.

The workshop aims also at promoting bilateral, regional and international cooperation, in particular, the South-South cooperation, in the areas of ICT policy, strategy and regulation through the establishment of a network of ICTD stakeholders and policy makers for sharing experiences and knowledge which will lead to capacity building.

3. Topics

The workshop will mainly cover the following topics:

1. **Crafting national ICT strategies for development:** It involves outlining the core issues facing a country moving towards the knowledge society.

2. **Formulating sectoral policies as part of an integrated knowledge society:** The need for integrating national ICT strategies overlaps with four well-established policy fields namely technology, industry, telecommunications and media strategies. This workshop will focus on policies for education, employment, health and welfare, which are increasingly having to address issues in which ICT could play a profound enabling role.

3. **Implementing the strategies and devising plans of action:** While it can be difficult to reach consensus on the basic components of a strategy, the institution of measures to ensure and monitor implementation of the strategy could prove more complex. Moreover, despite the high quality of a strategy, it could fail to be implemented. Thus, this workshop will focus on modalities that can be adopted to ensure the effective implementation of a strategy.

4. **Measuring, analyzing and evaluating the impact of ICT policies:** The workshop will focus on measuring the degree of improvement in analyzing and evaluating results. Measurement allows a country to assess its status and provides quantitative reference between regions and countries. Measurement could also be considered as an effective tool for monitoring implementation as it can provide periodic feedback reports to assess progress against goals. Finally, measurement is also useful in predicting future events or outcomes.

5. **Prioritizing actions for the knowledge society:** National ICT strategies must establish a set of key priority areas for intervention such as capacity building, telecommunications reform, e-government, Internet governance, security and e-commerce. Many of these areas are linked to the priorities stated within national development strategies.

6. **Designing partnership schemes and financing initiatives towards the knowledge society:** WSIS outcome highlighted two main concerns in reducing the digital divide between developing and developed countries; namely, financing and partnership. The workshop will focus on specific needs of ESCWA member countries related to partnerships for building the knowledge society and financing the required projects.

4. Outcomes

The major output of the Workshop will be to enhance capacity of national governments institutions of ESCWA member countries in planning and implementing ICT national strategies and policies, as well as initiate effective participation in global and regional decision making processes on ICT policy. It also aims to identify key regional ICT stakeholders and policy makers.

5. Organization

The Workshop will be conducted in Beirut, Lebanon during the period 2-4 May 2006.

The Workshop will be organized by the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) at ESCWA, in coordination with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It will include a number of general presentations and case studies from selected ESCWA member countries on the above topics as well as discussion sessions focusing on ICT policy and the integration of ICT and its applications in development plans. A session dedicated for the recommendations of the workshop and the follow-up for building a network of ICT policy makers, will conclude the workshop.

6. Participants/registration

Participants of this workshop are mainly from government agencies in charge of ICT for development policies, telecommunications operators and Internet/application service providers. ICT entrepreneurs/start-ups and professional and civil society organizations are invited to attend as potential stakeholders. Priority countries are least developing and post conflict countries.

Pre-registration can be performed by filling and returning the attached pre-registration form by email to Nibal Idlebi <idlebi@un.org>, with cc to Sukaina Al-Nasrawi <al-nasrawi@un.org>.

A limited number of fellowship grants to attend the workshop are available for participants with potential to become active member of the network of ICT stakeholders and policy makers. Special attention will be given to participants located in least developing and post conflict countries to support their travel and/or subsistence expenses.

7. Language

The working languages of the workshop will be Arabic and English. Therefore, simultaneous translation from Arabic to English and vice-versa will be provided during the sessions.

8. Additional Information

Submissions, inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

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Inquiries regarding logistics, including travel and accommodation, should be directed to:

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