

Paper V

Speech  
(5 Minutes)

Thailand Statement  
Address to the Plenary Meeting

By

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(Second Speaker)

Mr. Chairman / Madame Chairperson,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Thailand emerged from the economic crisis of the nineties, she has begun a new era of economic recovery and progress. The present Thai government under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has implemented new policies on social and economic development for self-sufficiency with the goal of long-term sustainability for future prosperity of all her citizens. With this concept based on active participation of people in all sectors of society, the Government has introduced a new management structure throughout government administration. Instrumental in achieving results is the decision to use Information and Communication Technologies as a powerful tool based on four principles: Promotion of global information access and broadband; bridging the digital and knowledge divide both within and between countries; human resource development and use of IT for economic development at the grassroots level.

First, we actively promote universal access. For instance, we have:

- The well-known “Budget PC” programme named “Sinsamut”. This was introduced through a public-private partnership, leveraging volumes and alliances so that more families can own their first PC for about 12 US Dollars a month over two years.
- A nationwide network named CATNET, comprising 751 telecentres located at various post offices throughout the country.
- A “Clean Net” nationwide dial-up Internet service for only 2.5 US Cents an hour.
- A Nationwide broadband service, costing about 25 US Dollars per month will soon be made available.
- and “Good Net”. A project which reinvents the Internet cafe, changing it into an active and vibrant centre for e-Learning and e-Commerce.

Second, Thailand is committed to bridging the digital and knowledge divide in our society with implementation of the Information and Communication Technology Master Plan of 2002 to 2006. Not only is Thailand co-hosting with the United Nations a workshop on contribution of satellite communication technology to bridge the digital divide in the Asia-Pacific region, it is strongly committed to promoting inclusiveness of all people with disabilities guided by the Universal Design Principle and further enhanced by the use of assistive technologies.

The Royal Thai Government views libraries as the gateway to life-long learning of universal knowledge for people in the communities they serve. We are committed to expanding and modernizing these centres of learning further to include e-Library and a web-based Thailand Knowledge Centre, a portal dedicated to preservation and dissemination of our indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage.

Third is capacity building of human resources. Eighty percent of our secondary schools now have free dial-up Internet access through our Schoolnet project. To meet our knowledge workers target of thirty percent by 2010, we provide both scholarships for software development, short courses and internships to retrain graduates in other disciplines. Through partnerships with world-famous academic and research entities, we are forming extensive networks to train our trainers for tomorrow's knowledge-based society.

Fourth we leverage ICT for economic development at the grass-roots level. The low-cost PC that I mentioned earlier will not only allow average people to learn about ICTs but use them for real economic and social gains. We have set up three ICT cities in each corner of the country to serve as the nucleus of an academic, industrial and social cluster which will be the blueprint of tomorrow's e-Society.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Internet is a powerful tool. Its adverse effects must be minimised while its benefit must be promoted. We recently put a curfew on children playing Internet games. Despite western media criticism, teachers and eventually even the players themselves grew to accept, and agree with, these measures. Cellular telephony is another effective venue for extending ICT reach. Thai people are beginning to use mobile phones to acquire information through m-Services and, soon, m-Government.

As Thailand is the Host Economy of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) this year, allow me by way of conclusion to make a few remarks on behalf of the 21 member economies of APEC. APEC has driven down trade barriers in ICT services and enhanced ICT development through capacity-building projects and the exchange of best practices. APEC has responded to the specific needs of SMEs by endorsing a special e-Strategy, empowering them through ICTs. Indeed, APEC has utilised ICT to empower the potential of the people in the region which together accounts for 47% of world trade and to increase efficiency of businesses and governments across borders. The work of APEC can be found in my statement on behalf of APEC that has already been circulated for your information.

Thank you.