

**Statement by Mr Kim Hak-Su  
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations and  
Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific**

**at the  
World Summit on the Information Society**

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**Mr President,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to address this plenary session of the World Summit on the Information Society. As you are aware, the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit resolved to ensure that the benefits of new technology, especially ICT, were available to all.

Indeed, the world economy is in the midst of a profound transformation. Spurred on by breakthroughs in ICT in particular, the global information revolution has created the potential for accelerating broad-based growth and sustainable development, including poverty eradication, in developing countries.

The Asian and Pacific region accounts for two thirds of the world population and the ICT market of the region is the biggest in the developing world and the fastest-growing. Several countries in the region are major players in ICT and thus ICT development in the region is moving at a rapid pace in both the public and the private sectors.

However, inevitably, not all countries around the world and the regions have benefited equally in the transition to the new global economy. Many developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, and particularly the least developed countries, island developing countries and countries with economies in transition, account for only a small fraction of the global digital economy. The phenomenally rapid advances in ICT thus pose an immense challenge for many countries to catch up, reflecting the wide spread of the digital divide.

After three years of reform and revitalization of ESCAP, ICT has come to the forefront of the activities in our three thematic programme areas of poverty alleviation, managing globalization and emerging social issues. ESCAP is further promoting an interdisciplinary approach to dealing with ICT involving all of its substantive divisions.

A large number of initiatives have been taken at the regional level to harness the potential of ICT and address the digital divide. ESCAP, with the regional countries and its partners from the Regional Interagency Working Group on ICT, which includes APT, ADB, ITU, UNESCO and UNDP, has organized a number of high-level regional conferences as the regional contribution to this World Summit. In particular, the Tokyo Declaration adopted by the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference for the World Summit, held in Tokyo in January this year, provides critical guiding principles for bridging the digital divide and building the

information society in Asia and the Pacific and has been selected as a basis for the formulation of the Declaration of Principles and the global Plan of Action.

This proves that the regional exchange of experiences and best practices, the regional networking of initiatives and the creation and pursuance of a common regional vision play a decisive role in the creation of the information society.

Realizing the importance of the regional dimensions in building the information society, ESCAP members and associate members have given ESCAP a clear mandate to assist them in building the information society. In particular, the Committee on Managing Globalization, just held in November 2003, while expressing appreciation to ESCAP for playing a leading and coordinating role in developing a regional consensus in the context of the preparations for the first phase of the World Summit, requested it to continue to play that role in the implementation of the follow-up to the first phase and the regional preparations for the second phase in Tunisia. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that a regional plan of action towards the information society be formulated based on the regional road map developed earlier with the leadership of ESCAP. The Committee further suggested that the regional action plan needs to be complemented with national action plans and should integrate the considerations of the World Summit on the Information Society, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

In that spirit, and taking into account the various commitments that have been made in the preparatory process leading up to the Summit, let us pledge to work together to achieve the vision mapped out by the Summit.

Thank you.