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Keynote Speech

by

Mrs. Jirawan Boonperm
Permanent Secretary
Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Thailand

at

8th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

24 November 2010

Madam Chair

Mr. Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, Director of BDT,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to deliver the keynote address on behalf of Mrs. Jirawan Boonperm, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand, who could not attend this significant meeting due to an urgent official engagement.

Information and communication technologies have become a key driver of economic and social development. Nowadays, Internet has become a general-purpose technology that reaches out to the people all over the world and thus, narrows the digital divide. Access to Broadband Internet is comparable to such basic infrastructures as road or electricity. In many developed countries, policy makers, regulators as well as industrial sector put an emphasis on broadband coverage and the number of broadband subscribers as indicators of the country's global competitiveness while others lay their focus on national rankings in terms of broadband infrastructure and take-up.

For ICT policy makers, the fundamental prerequisites to impose a policy are to include developing statistical indicators, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Accurate statistical data will then serve to monitor the implementation of policy to ensure its compliance with predetermined goals and objectives. Assessment needs is also necessary to be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency and also to identify difficulties and factors that impede successful policy implementation. On account of this, the availability of ICT-related statistics at the international level will allow policymakers to align domestic policy with the international standards and trends.

When it comes to ICT statistics, defining indicators and collecting data usually revolve around measuring accessibility to infrastructures and services. Meanwhile, it is essential to take into consideration interactions that tend to take place between different components that come into play naming policy, infrastructure, technology, content and applications, innovation, people and government as well as the need to balance demand and supply. Since ICT is a cross-cutting sector that involves authorities from different fields encompassing education, health, commerce, transportation and security to name just some of them, therefore, a national committee should be set up to formulate an integrated policy and carry out periodic evaluation.

In light of our experience in developing indicators and collecting data, we reckoned that difficulties arose when it came to defining indicators as some of them are open to several interpretations and therefore a central authority needed to be appointed with the mandate to collect and unify statistical definitions. Moreover, each public agency in Thailand used to have its own database and data collecting mechanism, which caused incoherence or disunity of input for the elaboration of cross-sectoral policy and work programmes of public organizations. Hence, the National Statistical Office has been assigned by the Royal Thai Government in order to serve as a central agency responsible for data collection and providing comprehensive statistical information for the making of public policy in accordance with the ultimate national goals set out by the government including the goal of increasing Thailand's global competitiveness.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to give you an overview of Thailand's standing in terms of ICT policy and plan. Our country is currently applying the second Thailand Information and Communication Technology Master Plan which is already in use from 2009 to 2013. Under this Second ICT Master Plan, its vision on ICT development is to move forward the country into **Smart Thailand**. It places a priority on the role of ICT in social and economic development by emphasizing the improvement of quality of life and society through developing a knowledge-based society. One of the goals laid out in this plan is bridging the existing digital divide by deployment of high speed ICT network nationwide with high quality services under reasonable price. This will be the key basic infrastructure for social and economic development of the country where Thai people would be able to get a better access to education and healthcare. Participation in the government administration of the country and political affairs would also be facilitated. Hence, the overall quality of life uplifted. In addition, the implementation of the Master Plan also serves the World Summit on the Information Society or WSIS goals and targets as contained in the Action Lines of the information society for all peoples, particularly the goal to promote Universal Access to Broadband by 2015. While implementing this Second ICT Master Plan, Thailand is already in the process of formulating "**ICT 2020 Policy Framework**", envisioning Thailand's ICT direction for the next 10 years.

Recognizing the ultimate necessity of ICT infrastructures and broadband network, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology including relevant telecom and ICT authorities are undertaking the drafting of Thailand's National Broadband Policy with the objective to promote the use

and maximize the benefits of broadband to enhance the capacities of businesses and industries, improve access to government services and promote universal access to broadband at a fair and affordable price for its citizen. The aims of the National Broadband Policy include:

- Broadband network coverage of at least 80 percent of the population by 2015 and 95 percent by 2020
- Accessibility for Thai people to universal broadband services of e-health, e-education and e-government at provincial and municipal levels by 2015
- Provision of emergency warning systems and information on disaster prevention and management through broadband

Distinguished delegates,

In this fast pace and ever changing era led by information and communication technology, it is undoubtedly that ICT has become vital to our societies. Statistical work on ICT, therefore, will allow countries to build up a comprehensive, effective and useful data collection and dissemination system. Such statistics on ICT data and ICT indicators also provide input for both economic and social areas.

May all your deliberations meet with success over these three days.

Thank you for your kind attention.
