**WSIS Forum 2022**

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**Creating synergies and partnerships on e-government between national and local levels**

**Siope Vakataki ‘Ofa, Economic Affairs Officer, ICT and Development Section, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP**

**Talking Points**

**How can international organizations, regional cooperation and government agencies at national level support cities?**

1. Thank UNDESA and other co-hosts of this event for inviting ESCAP to contribute to this very important agenda.
2. **National initiatives**: Several digital connectivity country initiatives in the Asia Pacific region has led to creation of new socio-economic opportunities and growth of smart cities at the local level. Economies such as Singapore, ROK, Japan, Australia and several other AP economies are good examples.
3. **Digital divide remains** a challenge, especially when COVID-19 pandemic intensified in 2020 and 2021. South Asia and Pacific islands developing countries continue to have limited access to fixed-broadband access, and considered unaffordable. Especially for women in rural communities.
4. **Regional cooperation through the AP-IS**: Sharing of country good experiences and information sharing could help other developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. This is were ESCAP and other regional partners can assist growth of e-government and smart cities.
5. **Through regional cooperation,** the ESCAP secretariat support Asia-Pacific countries to identify regional solutions for national digital challenges, and work together with other stakeholders to bridge the digital divide through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway.
6. An Action Plan of the AP-IS initiative was drafted by ESCAP member States that contain 25 actions under three pillars of connectivity for all, digital technologies and applications, and digital data, act as a blueprint for regional cooperation.
7. The Action Plan will be submitted to the ESCAP intergovernmental Committee on ICT and Science, Technology and Innovation in August 2022 for consideration and adoption. ESCAP is also co-hosting with the Republic of Korea a Ministerial Digital Conference in November 2022 as another **high-level platform** for regional policy dialogue.
8. One of the actions highlighted in the Action Plan is the need to promote rural-Urban digital connectivity. The experiences of COVID-19 restrictions in the last 2 years shows that major cities have managed to cope better with COVID-19 restrictions through schooling and working from home.
9. However, on the other hand, rural communities with less affordable and limited access to the Internet encountered significant challenges.
10. ESCAP is therefore implementing a project to strengthening rural digital and transport connectivity in 3 pilot countries of Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and Samoa. The objective of the project is to assess the opportunities and gaps on digital and transport connectivity in the 3 pilot countries and support the development of innovative strategies for improving rural digital and transport connectivity.
11. **Key message**: Multistakeholder regional cooperation platform such as the AP-IS initiative therefore promotes regional cooperation between different stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific to bridge the digital divide at the national level. Such multi-stakeholders partnership would contribute to the effective implementation of the WSIS action lines on C1, C7, and C11.
12. Thank you.