



## **Asia-Pacific 2020: toward the Era of “ICT Accessibility for All”**

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It is “power” which keeps all of us alive and move the world forward. It is information and knowledge which determine realization and enjoyment of power. It is, therefore, with my firm belief that ICT accessibility for all is inevitable if we are to achieve the true inclusive, green, innovative, affordable and sustainable society based on genuinely equal sharing of information and knowledge.

This statement may sound too good to be true. However, it is already on its way to become reality. Here are living evidences to prove:

- International, regional and national legal instruments, policies, standards and guidelines, driven by respect for human rights and inclusive social development,
- Business trend/requirement caused by demographic change (rapid moving toward aging society, greater number of persons with disabilities, multicultural/multilingual/multinational integration),
- Common concern over higher re-occurrence of disaster risks upon all members of the society.

As a result, I can see (without sight, but with my vision) that Asia-Pacific in the year 2020 the ICT industry/business will be more sensitive, responsive and respectful to human rights, sustainable development and community resilience. To this end, the disability communities have been promoting “accessibility” particularly in this case “ICT accessibility” for all through universal design, the use of assistive technologies and reasonable accommodation. It is a concept based on human functional implication beyond conventional understanding of “access” based on geographical and economic differences.

In the past, ICT accessibility could only be achieved through specific measures, so-called assistive technologies. But for a few years we have seen many ICT devices

with universal accessibility features being built into them from designing stage. A very good example of business success is the iOS-based devices with android-based one trying to catch up. Hopefully, the windows-based will soon follow such practice.

As for the digital content, we have already seen internationally recognized accessibility standards being gradually adopted and implemented, such as the Web Content Accessibility guideline (WCAG) for accessible web content and EPUB for accessible electronic publishing. I believe that in the year 2020, these two standards of accessibility will become more widely used as they allow digital content to be usable (easy-to-read, easy-to-understand) to people of different characteristics: ages, genders, cultural/linguistic diversity, disabilities, etc. To put it even much simpler, we will see more of digital content which could be read through our eyes, ears, hands, one or all modes and means of communication.

Finally, I would like to end my statement by referring to a song by John Lennon, called Imagine with slight modification:

“You may say I’m a dreamer,  
But I’m not the only one.  
I hope someday you’ll join us,  
And world, including Asia-Pacific, will be connected as one.”

Thank you!

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