



Committed to connecting the world

Connect Asia Pacific 2013



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Keynote Address of Her Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

Sawasdee ka,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Secretary-General Hamadoun I. Touré

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, may I begin by expressing my condolences to the families of the victims of the natural disaster in the Philippines. The Government and people of the Kingdom of Thailand hope that there will be a quick recovery.

I wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the Connect Asia-Pacific Summit 2013 here in Bangkok.

This Summit has been organized with the International Telecommunication Union or ITU, bringing together 38 countries for the first time.

We are here to achieve a common goal. To develop better and wider ICT links between nations and peoples. We hope these links will bring us all closer together, in friendship and progress.

Being a strong supporter of connectivity, Thailand looks forward to celebrating the 150th anniversary of the ITU in 2015, a year that will also mark the launching of the ASEAN Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are in the middle of a **"Digital New World"**, full of possibilities as well as uncertainties.

According to the ITU's "Measuring the Information Society", 250 million people came on line last year, and 40 percent of the world's population will be using the internet by the end of this year.

The Broadband Commission for Digital Development says that there are 9 billion connected devices today. By 2025, there will be one trillion. 4G subscriptions are expected to increase by ten times from 2012 to 2017.

These developments in technology have allowed more and more devices to be connected to one another. Before, ICT was mainly linked to computers and cell phones.

Now, ICT has progressed by expanding to cover other utilities, appliances in households and databases around the world.

These new connections have significantly changed our lives, by allowing us to have greater mobility to conduct business, and to stay connected with family and friends.

That is why promoting ICT for all is so important. We need to ensure that people of all nations have greater access to it.

ICT enhances trade and investment.

By connecting businesses to customers and sources of finance from around the world, SMEs can benefit.

Some have calculated that SMEs investing 30 percent of their budget on web technologies grow nine times faster than those that invest only 10 percent.

ICT also helps lower the costs of doing business for SMEs, making them be more competitive.

ICT also helps close gender gaps.

It has been estimated that bringing 600 million more women on line can increase global GDP by 13-18 billion US dollars.

I also recall my discussions with Secretary-General Touré where he informed me of ITU projects that enable pregnant women and those with infants to work from home through ICT. This has given them better job security.

Most importantly, ICT empowers people.

Better access to information and finance empowers the individual. A well informed citizen is the backbone of a strong democracy. Individual with better access to finances can be a more productive member of society.

Globally, ICT has played a key role in advancing MDGs for many countries.

For health, remote monitoring and diagnosis has helped countries achieve better health coverage. This has allowed medical care to reach areas that have never received sufficient medical care before.

For education, "Open Education Resources" and use of computer tablets have also led to wider and more effective education.

In Thailand, the government has also made these policies one of our top priorities.

We have distributed computer tablets with educational software to schoolchildren. We are enhancing ICT capabilities and coverage in schools and promoting long-distance learning.

ICT connectivity is a global agenda.

That is why the UN High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda stressed using the "new data revolution" more effectively, so that development leaves no one behind.

But let us not forget that there are also challenges.

One of the biggest challenges is the digital divide between countries, especially for the Least Connected Countries. Right now, 80 percent of households in developed countries have internet access, while in developing countries, only 28 percent have it.

Another major challenge is the misuse of ICT connectivity by individuals or groups.

This results in cybercrimes, cyber terrorism and violations of privacy. Both of these challenges should be addressed if we are to have a truly connected global community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To move forward together, there are four key steps that we can take.

First, we need to promote universal broadband access to everyone equally.

This should be a basic right, like other basic public utilities, such as water and electricity. Thailand is working hard to try and achieve this, by introducing free WiFi in public areas and a high speed communications network.

Universal broadband access in our region will require important investments. So it is our hope that international financial institutions can provide the necessary assistance.

Second, we need to look more closely at the software aspect of ICT connectivity.

This includes issues of regulations and capacity-building of personnel.

Special attention must be given to the Least Connected Countries and the Least Developed Countries. Here, I suggest that the ITU focus their studies on future ICT connectivity trends and needs of these countries and see how training and other programmes might help address some of the problems.

Third, we need to enhance partnerships between governments and other stakeholders including the private sector.

The challenges and promise of the "Digital New World" affects all sectors of society. So solutions need to be worked out by stakeholders working together.

After all, stakeholders include the ICT industry, the tourism sector, agriculture, manufacturing, large and small businesses, educators and civil society.

That is why Thailand is pleased that there are many stakeholders from all sectors here at the Summit. We need to take what we learn from this Summit and get a more concrete outcome, including implementing our Declaration.

And fourth, ICT connectivity is key to inclusive growth and development.

Growth must benefit and involve everyone.

On the part of governments, we can support inclusive growth by having our public services, from health care to education to public safety, reach everyone, in particular in remote and less developed areas.

At the global level, we need to make enhanced ICT connectivity part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. To facilitate this, the ITU could integrate the recommendations of this and previous Summits to the global discussions on development.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, the Asia-Pacific is seen by many as the engine of the global economy and the hope for global recovery.

Enhanced ICT connectivity plays an important role in sustaining this growth engine.

So it is up to us to help achieve this.

I hope that this Summit will find practical ways for us to make best use of ICT connectivity to promote inclusive growth and the well being of the peoples of the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you for your attention.

The Conference

Invitations
Registration
Documents
Medias
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Connect Series
Related Websites

Summit Programme

Summit Grand Opening

09:00-10:30 in Royal Jubilee



High-Level Panel - Envisioning Asia-Pacific 2020

11:00-12:30 in Royal Jubilee



Lunch

12:30-14:00 in Garden Challenger 1