Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Telecommunications Ministerial Forum

"Digital Bridge Over Mekong River"

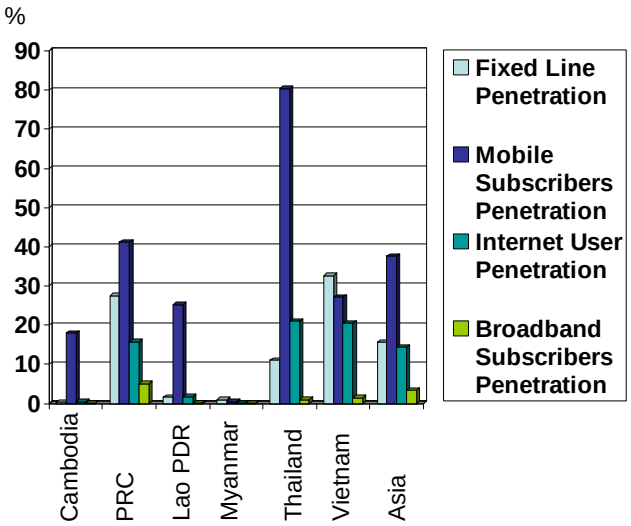
2 September 2008
Jupiter 13 Meeting Room
IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Center
Bangkok Thailand

Final Programme

Draft Meeting Agenda

Background: The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprises Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam and is home to more than 300 million people with over 100 different ethnic groups living within the Mekong River boundaries, making it one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world. GMS countries are also in different levels of telecommunication development (See Table 1 below) resulting in digital divide within the subregion and among countries in the Asia Pacific and other regions.

Table 1: GMS Countries in different levels of telecommunication development (2007)



Source: ITU ICT Statistics Database

TELECOM Asia 2008's GMS Telecommunications Ministerial Forum will focus on the following areas under the theme of **Digital Bridge over Mekong River: Attracting Investment and Calling for Cooperation in Rural Communication Development and Disaster Communication**

- **Rural Communication: Calling for Cooperation and Attracting Investment.** The Asia-Pacific region is on one hand, at the forefront of technical innovation, spearheading the roll out of the latest technologies. On the other hand, a significant proportion of countries within the region are still struggling to provide affodable telecommunication services to their citizens, thus excluding them from and denying them the benefits of the Information Society.

  The statistics showing different levels of penetration in a number of telecommunication/ICT services in Table 1 indicate that there is a great telecommunication/ICT development gap among countries within the GMS and with other subregions/regions in the world. The good news is: a growing community of technologists, policy makers and telecommunication/ICT practitioners foresee a revolution in rural universal access. This revolution can be founded on a new suite of technologies such as Wi-Fi, matched by supportinve public policies and business approaches that can provide affordable voice and internet access to rural and underserved communities. New and creative enterprises can make rural and low income markets profitable, affordable and served in ways that meet national and local development objectives with supporting innovation and creative business and public policies.

- **ICTs and Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Management**. Increasingly, natural disasters are causing considerable loss of lives and disrupting national economies, severely weakening the affected coutnries. While neither natural or man-made hazards can be entirely prevented, information and communication technologies (ICT) can help reduce their impact and avoid them turning into disasters that impede sustainable development. This year, 2 GMS countries: Myanmar and China were hit by

cyclone Nargis and earthquake respectively that caused loss of thousand of lives, injuries and heavy damage to properties. Effective disaster management calls for solid preparedness with procedures and processes well in place.

TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2008	
11:30 – 12:30	**GMS Ministerial Meeting (closed meeting)**
12:30 - 14:15	**GMS Ministerial Lunch Hosted by MICT Thailand**
14:30 – 15:30	**GMS Telecommunication Ministerial Forum Opening Session** **Welcome Remarks: H.E. Mr. Mun Patanotai, Ph.D**, Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand **Opening Remarks: Dr. Hamadoun Touré**, ITU Secretary General **Remarks from GMS Ministers**
15:30 – 16:00	**Coffee/Tea Break**
16:00 – 17:45	**Digital Bridge over Mekong River: Attracting Investment and Calling for Cooperation in Rural Communication Development and Disaster Communication**
	Session Description: Many people in developing countries, particularly those living in rural areas, still do not have access to basic telecommunications/ICTs and there is need to create opportunities for digital services in developing countries and in particular the least developed countries, landlocked and small island developing states, and countries with economies in transition. 1. While the high income economies of the Asia-Pacific region forge ahead with faster broadband and emerging services, many of the low income developing countries lag behind due to factors such as lack of infrastructure and investment, adverse geographical conditions, size of domestic market, regulatory and policy provisions that are not conducive to promoting public-private partnerships, skills shortages and even lack of relevant content and applications. Rural communication – is it charity work or is there market opportunity? ITU research indicates that in many cases, untapped rural and remote markets can be surprisingly vibrant, given appropriate regulatory conditions. The economic potential of rural markets can be measured not only by outgoing call revenues, but also revenues from calls terminated to new subscribers in rural areas, notably from urban callers calling their relatives and friends. Data from Chile, for example, demonstrates that rural telecommunication operators earn more than 60 per cent of their revenues from incoming calls. 2. When communication infrastructure is damaged or destroyed during a natural disaster – or when it is lacking in remote areas – links need to be established quickly so that help, coordination and relief operations can be organized as swiftly and efficiently as possible. In addition, damage assessments must be carried out and future communication planned with disaster preparedness in mind. ITU is responding to these needs following major disasters around the world. Recent events, such as cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in China this year bring home the urgency with which challenges need to be addressed. Ministers will discuss and present their views on what kind of "bridges" will close the telecommunication/ICT development gap not only among countries in GMS but between the subregion and other developed subregions/regions in the world. They will also look

	at how coordination and ITU response to countries in times of natural disasters can be further improved. **Session Chair**: **Dr. Seung-Taik Yang,** former Minister of MIC, (Korea Rep. of); Invited Researcher at Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute **Keynote Speaker: HE Mr. Khamlouat Sidlokone**, National Authority of Posts and Telecommunication, Lao PDR *Speaker*: **Mr.Wang Jianzhou**, CEO, China Mobile *Speaker*: **Major General Manzurul Alam,ndc, psc (retd),** Chairman, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Bangladesh *Speaker*: **Mr. Direk Charoenphol,** Advisor, National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) Thailand Dialogue with GMS Ministers Q and A with Stakeholders
17:45 – 18:00	**Closing Session** **Closing Remarks: H.E. Mr. Mun Patanotai, Ph.D**, Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand **Closing Remarks: Mr. Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid**, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU