
	<p>SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING FOR THE PACIFIC ICT MINISTERIAL FORUM: "CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED" 17-18 FEBRUARY 2009, TONGA</p>	 <p>Department of Communications, Kingdom of Tonga</p>
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Opening Remarks

Eun-Ju Kim
Head of ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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Excellencies,

Honorable, Mr. Paula Pouvalu Ma'u, Acting Chief Secretary, Acting Secretary to Cabinet and Acting Secretary for Communications, Kingdom of Tonga,

Dr. Xuan, Chief of IDD, ESCAP,

Mr. John Budden, PIFS

Partners, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, we - ITU - would like to thank the Kingdom of Tonga for their kind hosting as well as warm hospitality extended to all the participants to this historic Pacific ICT Ministerial Forum.

Yes, indeed, this is a historic event for the ITU as it is ITU's first ICT Ministerial Forum in the Pacific, for the Pacific and by the Pacific Island States, organized not just by the ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Office but by the entire team from both ITU Headquarters and the Region under the leadership of Mr. Sami Al-Basheer Al-Moshid, Director of Telecommunication Development Bureau of ITU. As I understand, this is also the first meeting after the Wellington Declaration in 2006 made by the Pacific Islands ICT Ministers under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum.

This is truly a unique platform, where over fifteen partners ranging from UN, funding agencies, intergovernmental organizations, private industries, national security agency, regional emergency agency, sub-regional and regional telecommunication organizations, non-governmental organization (NGO) to academic players - i.e., public-private partnership (PPP) - have joined together with their innovative technologies, initiatives and proposals to the Pacific and for the Pacific, which would contribute towards connecting the unconnected in the Pacific by entire gamut of telecommunications/ICTs ranging from the affordable access, applications, to human capacity building in line with the WSIS target date of 2015.

Many have acknowledged the daunting tasks faced by and in the Pacific, in terms of the geographic, demographic and economic challenges. The remoteness of the Pacific Islands, coupled with lower economies of scale, scattered islands and, in most cases, low purchasing power, results in high costs of communications particularly international connectivity.

As global leaders at the recent Economic Forum held in Davos have highlighted, innovation can be important for offering solutions for not only the world in general but also for the Pacific in particular. We often say and hear that opportunity arises out of crisis. But, the danger in the equation is passivity and/or lack of response.

That is why, I am very optimistic and pleased to observe that over hundred top decision-makers and key stakeholders led by two Prime Ministers and/or ten Ministers from the Pacific and numerous partners around the world have flown all the way to Tonga specially during such a challenging time of economic crisis worldwide. This is, I would say, a very strong and active response to solve TOGETHER the challenges faced by the Pacific in the

very interdependent and interconnected knowledge-driven information society, where infrastructure and digital line investments are required in this new age.

Having said the active response and partnership, I would like to share with you about the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives proposed by our Members in the Asia-Pacific region and adopted at the ITU's World Telecom Development Conference held in Doha in 2006 to address special needs in our region, whilst mobilizing various resources. One of the five Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives is focusing on "The unique needs of Pacific islands and small island developing states". Therefore, it has been our endeavour to fulfil the task entrusted upon by the Members and in doing so we have always strived to work with numerous partners especially based on the PPP for building synergy and avoiding duplication, as is evident from this meeting. We are very thankful to our Members and Partners for their trust in us and the strong bond and partnership, that we have built over the years.

Dear Members and Partners.

Let me now turn to the Senior Officials' Meeting being organized for today and tomorrow. The main objective of this Meeting is to prepare for the Pacific ICT Ministerial Forum to be held from February 19 to 20 2009 by examining various innovative projects and initiatives proposed by various partners, discussing on their feasibilities and sustainability, and identifying potential solutions to connect the unconnected Pacific by 2015 for affordable, reliable and secure telecommunication/ICT services to and for all in the Pacific.

In order to achieve the objective, this Meeting will be composed of six main themes or sessions such as: e.g.,

- Affordable Access for Domestic and International Connectivity respectively,
- Enabling Environment through Policy, Regulatory and Financial Frameworks,
- ICT Applications and Cybersecurity,
- Emergency cum Disasters Communications and Climate Change, and last but not the least,
- Human Capacity Building.

Each session will start with introducing Background Note prepared by our colleagues from the ITU through analyzing various existing reports, studies and activities for each theme in order to avoid reinventing the wheels. Then, it will be followed by not just presentations but proposals or projects for and in the Pacific offered by various partners concerned with their expertise and technologies, so as to provoke the discussions and provide potential solutions for each theme. In other words, it is not simply an ITU meeting but a platform for ALL - Members and Partners alike, since it wouldn't be possible to organize this meeting without such heartfelt support and enormous commitment from all Members and Partners well in advance with many many sleepless nights to make this happen.

While the projects and initiatives being offered by Partners and ITU will be implemented in and for the Pacific together with the Pacific Island

countries for the years to come, the end-product will be the Communiqué which will be drafted by this Meeting and adopted by the Ministerial Forum.

Taking this wonderful opportunity, I also would like to seek your awareness and preparation for your inputs and priorities to the forthcoming Regional Meeting for the Asia-Pacific Region in Malaysia, May 2009, which would prepare for the next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) to be held in 2010. I know it is hard to believe that it is already a time for the next WTDC, while Doha seems just like yesterday.

Looking forward to your innovative proposals and active responses throughout the sessions, I wish you all to enjoy the meeting and partnership in the Kingdom of Tonga as well as achieve productive outcome and networking for all the Partners and State Members from the Pacific.

Last but not the least, thank you all - Members and Partners - for your kind attention, participation and support. Malo Aupito.

Visit Forum home page at <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2009/PacMinForum/PacMinForum.asp>

Pacific ICT Ministerial Forum: Connecting the unconnected

Thank you to our partners:

