

## **Sri Lanka**

### **Sri Lanka's Input for the WORLD SUMMIT on the INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The **Democratic Socialist Republic of SRI LANKA**, located in the Asia- Pacific region encompasses many facets and characteristics common to the Region. Being a developing country, **SRI LANKA** has accepted the importance of ICT for economic and social upliftment.

We consider the **Second Preparatory Committee Meeting**, on the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)** in succession to the Regional Conferences to be a major opportunity for Countries to exchange views on the benefits and opportunities that should be afforded equally to all in a global scale.

We consider it an utmost necessity to adopt guidelines aimed at satisfying the requirements of all Countries, including developing ones, in the **Declaration of Principles** and a **Plan of Action** at the Summit.

**SRI LANKA** views the scenario on the basis of:-

- **Forming a shared vision**
- **Bridging the 'Digital Divide'**
- **Developing Information and Communication Infrastructure**
- **Essential applications of the Information Society**
- **HRD and enhancement of ICT literacy**

The past few years have brought forth worldwide attention to the role of **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)** for achieving higher levels of National Development.

While the Developed Countries have been successful in deploying systems based on advanced ICT to cater to the improvement in the quality of life for their Citizens, Developing Countries have not yet been successful in harnessing the benefits of these Technologies to a significant level.

However, studies carried out reveal that most Countries in the Asian Region, through their large and creative Human Resource base have the potential to obtain the highest benefits from ICT developments and to be key Centres in adopting ICT for

- **realizing improved quality of Life** for their Citizens by means of providing Education, Health Services, preservation of Cultural heritage and Economic opportunities and access to information on agriculture, fisheries etc.
- **to be major providers of ICT Services** to the Global Market in the future, by harnessing the talents of their educated workforce.

## FORMING A SHARED VISION

### Declaration

Recognising that ICT,

- has enormous capacity to **exchange knowledge based information**, all Developing and Developed Countries **should co-operate** to strengthen the foundations of ICT.

### Action Plan

- **Increase co-operation** in exchanging expertise in respect of ICT developments through provision of opportunities for inter- country dialogue, opportunities for experts to exchange views, information and research opportunities, technology transfer and adaptation of affordable prices for the less developed countries from more technically developed and competent countries within the Asian Region.

### Pilot Projects

Forum on **Private Key Infrastructure(PKI)**

## BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

### Declaration

- Strive to **bridge the 'Digital Divide'** between and within Nations, Countries, Cultures, abled and disabled people.

### Action Plan

- **Empowerment of all sectors** of Communities of a Country, by providing Centres in Rural and Middle level communities, so as to enhance:-
  - a) **Access to Information Resources**
  - b) **Sharing of expert knowledge** in respect of Medical, Educational, Cultural- heritage, Development Planning and Governance related activities etc. through National and Regional information Hubs.
  - b) **Transparency** of major Development Projects and encouraging open participation in Key National development efforts.

### Model Projects

- Telecommunication facilities **for people with special needs**

The Main Goals of the project are:-

- a) To provide at least **basic Telecommunication facilities** at reasonable costs and to consider concessions on rentals.

- b) To provide **facilities to groups of People with disabilities** such as those persons injured by Wars and conflicts.
  - c) Introduction of **Braille Bills** for people with impaired vision.
  - d) To make available **new technologies** to enable them communicate with each other.
  - e) To **encourage people** with disabilities to participate in social activities.
  - f) To **provide concessions** on Installation charges, Rentals etc.
  - g) To encourage the use of '**Assistive Technologies**.' i.e. specially designed Equipment etc.
- Internet through **Community Radio Projects** ( e.g. in Sri Lanka)

## **Pilot Project Proposal**

### **Information and Communication Community Centres in Rural Areas**

A **Rural Information and Community Centre** to provide,

- a. **Access to Agricultural Information** (from local and international bodies.) Local research findings could be disseminated.
- b. Rural Farmers **information on weather patterns** and other relevant information
- c. Relevant **pricing information** to Farmers.
- d. Receipt of **inputs from Farmers** on crop information and relevant harvest information. This information can be fed to National Organisations to identify market pricing and to determine whether particular Agricultural Produce should be imported to stabilize prices.

The scenario stated above looks at Rural Farmers. However, **this scenario can be expanded to activities such as Education, Community Services or Rural Vocational Services etc.**

## **DEVELOPING INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Issues**

- **Low national Roll-out rate** of Telecommunication facilities.
- **High cost of communication charges** payable. by subscribers, due to inadequate development of Infrastructure and low growth of competition.
- **Absence of National and Regional Information Resources**, Gateways and Communication Networks in developing Countries resulting in disproportionate payments to Developed Countries for accessing and utilizing the. currently available information sources on the Internet.

- **Unbalanced Internet traffic** between the Developed and Developing Countries.

### **Declaration**

- take necessary steps to **develop Infrastructure for all citizens to access resources** such as Internet .

### **Action Plan**

- **Increase the Roll-out rate of ICT** by adopting the latest Technologies in Telecommunications services, such as Mobile Telephony, Microwave Networks, Integrated Services Digital Networks (ISDN), Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) ( which are less expensive than the fixed line communications) and introducing High bandwidth Optical Fibre Networks.(Broadband)

### **Pilot Project Proposal**

#### **Regional Internet Servers**

Setting up **Regional Internet Servers in the Asian Region** to ensure fast access in receiving ICT-based content. To **Cache** the regional content in Asia which could be accessed easily through these servers. This would ensure lower cost of access time and will allow to obtain larger volumes of information being shared by Users.

## **ESSENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

### **Issues**

- **Inadequate Legal frameworks** for attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the field of ICT.

### **Declaration**

- All countries in the Asian Region should **co-operate in seeking solutions to ICT issues** that hinder the free flow of information and enhance trading through ICT.

### **Action Plan**

- Develop and define a framework to **establish a Platform for Asian Regional Co-operation** in adopting '**Open Source**' software in Small and Medium Enterprise applications. **A Regional Collective agreement** on **establishing a portal** under an appropriate International Agency with regional presence may be considered.
- Develop **National information / Regional gateways** with application content relevant for information sharing and communication between all sectors of communities.
- To establish **relevant Legal frameworks** to ensure **Privacy and Security** for transactions facilitated by ICT and establish **Regional Certification Regimes**.

**Pilot Project:**

**Results of Examinations** issued by Government to be made available in the Internet

**HRD & ENHANCEMENT OF ICT LITERACY**

**Issues**

- **Shortage of Human Resources** in specialized areas of ICT.

**Declaration**

- **Ensure** that every Citizen (whether rich or poor, urban or rural) has the required knowledge to participate in the Information Society.

**Action Plan**

- **ICT Capacity building** through enhancement of ICT know-how at 'grass root' level

**Model Projects:**

Awarding Degrees in INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY and similar through **Distance- Learning Methods.**

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