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AIBD - Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development

Bangkok Declaration on:

**The 1st Conference of the Ministers on
Information & Broadcasting in the Asia – Pacific Region
May 27 - 28, 2003 - Bangkok, Thailand**

Introduction:

The 1st Conference of the Ministers on Information and Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific region was held in Bangkok from 27-28 May 2003 and was hosted by the esteemed Government of the Kingdom of Thailand.

This was in the form of a Thematic Debate and a regional preparatory meeting for the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva in 2003. His Excellency, **Dr. Wissanu Krea- nagm**, Deputy Prime Minister graced the Conference on behalf of His excellency **Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra**, the Prime Minister of Thailand and delivered the Keynote address at the Inauguration ceremony on May 27, 2003.

The Ministers of Information and Broadcasting from various countries in the Asia – Pacific region as well as heads of radio and television organizations, policy makers, decision makers, scholars, and representatives of international organizations attended this unique Conference in Bangkok to discuss pressing matters related to Information and Broadcasting sectors. H.E. Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand hosted the Conference, which was organized by the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and actively supported by the International Telecommunication Union, UNESCO, United Nations, the Friedrich- Ebert – Stiftung (FES) and the French Government.

Taking into account the cultural, political, economical and financial diversity in the region, this Conference focused on current issues, concerns, challenges in the broadcasting industry such as globalization, digital divide, women and children's issues, television rights for sporting events, public service broadcasting and other matters; and looked into the possible alternatives and responses.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss in depth the experiences and challenges being faced by the public service broadcasters in the region and to arrive at a better understanding and closer cooperation in responding to the challenges. The Conference adopted constructive recommendations for further consideration by all stakeholders in Information and Broadcasting as the first regional attempt of its kind.

Preamble:

- a. Considering that Globalization should be a two- way road and there is a growing concern about the possible expansion of one single global culture, media is encouraged to contribute to the preservation of cultural identities and to the promotion of cultural diversity, without destroying the

positive factors of internationalism. Media professionals can play an important role in informing, educating and entertaining the public, fostering peace and mutual respect.

- b. Believing that **Diversity lends itself to** enrichment of human community; broadcasters should perceive and project that diversity to promote peace, and communal harmony amongst nations of the world.
- c. *Mindful* of the crucial role played by public service broadcasting in increasing the awareness of the people, promoting freedom of expression, ensuring free flow of information and ideas, maintaining diversity in the broadcasting sector and empowering the communities, public service broadcasting should provide programming that serves the public interest and facilitate people's participation in development programmes for the societies.
- d. Taking into account that the **technology revolution** and the Internet development has opened up a new digital era, the perceived information divide needs to be bridged. The Conference adopted the following recommendations: -

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation – 1 ■ Media and Globalization

Media, in public and private domain, is encouraged and needs to be facilitated to:

- 1.1 Be impartial and sensitive in reporting while being independent.
- 1.2 Become fora for public dialogue, knowledge sharing, promotion of diversity, mutual understanding and tolerance.
- 1.3 Create rich and quality local content to meet social expectations.

Recommendation – 2 ■ Cultural Diversity

- 2.1 The participants considered that, unlike ordinary goods, cultural and audiovisual works do not lend themselves to governance by general rules of free exchange of goods and services. They subscribe to the concept of cultural diversity, including in multicultural and multi ethnic societies in order to prevent the global risk of standardization. All concerned parties, governments, civil societies, public and private broadcasters are encouraged to preserve and promote cultural diversity in their respective countries and internationally, to develop dialogue among various cultures.
- 2.2 Authorities are encouraged to:
 - a. Develop specific regulatory mechanism to support and encourage public and private Radio and Television programmes aimed to promote cultural diversity;
 - b. Create a fund to encourage broadcasters, artists, and producers, to produce and broadcast programmes with local contents;
 - c. Ensure that the right holders / artists can get their proper dues and copyright of the products is rightfully protected.
- 2.3 The participants consider UNESCO to be the appropriate international institution to develop an international normative instrument to protect and promote cultural diversity.

Recommendation – 3 ■ Public Service Broadcasting

- 3.1 Public Service Broadcasters are encouraged to :-

- a. Promote and develop education- including community education, spread of information, empowerment and people's participation in society and development addressing all groups of society.
- b. Create programs which carry credibility with pluralistic groups and which promote cultural diversity and bring positive effects of globalization to all communities.
- c. Create rich and quality content for all, and in particular by and for women, youth and children that counters the influence of violence, communal hatred and carry such content on prime time.
- d. Initiate public debate and common ground talks between policy-makers, academics and media professionals to counter negative effects of violence in media. Broadcasters can promote the culture of dialogue among civilizations with the view to promote understanding and peace.
- e. Exploit new technologies to expand coverage and accessibility to information and healthy entertainment.
- f. Promote protection of copyrights of content by coming out strongly against piracy and unauthorized use of content.

3.2 Authorities are encouraged to :-

- a. Allow autonomy in content creation, management, finance and administration of Public Service Broadcasters.
- b. Study and consider the following funding mechanism for public service broadcasting:
 - 1). One time fee while buying a radio/ television/electronic appliances/ mobile phones
 - 2). Introducing a license fee; either as a stand alone or as an addition to the electricity bill,
 - 3). Government grants for infrastructure,
 - 4). Advertisement/commercial revenue. But it should not undermine the mandate of public service broadcasting,
 - 5). Sponsorship,
- c. Contribute to production of programmes for clearly defined developmental needs.
- d. Regularly review the mandate of Public Service Broadcasting in view of national, regional and global events in order to foster mutual understanding, tolerance and trust.
- e. Allocate preferential frequencies to Public Service Broadcasters,
- f. Create legal structures to allow independence of decision making to the public broadcasters.
- g. Ensure allocation of adequate time by private networks for public service programmes and for pluralistic content for all groups of the society.
- h. Ensure complete editorial independence.

Recommendation – 4 ■ Information Divide

4.1 Authorities are requested to make efforts to:-

- a. Promote the spread of information / education by expanding the reach and coverage of TV and radio.
- b. Reduce the gap between the potential haves and have nots in the digital age by promoting the use of ICTs, particularly through setting up community multimedia centres.
- c. Provide universal and affordable access to information and infrastructure.
- d. Protect the interests of the economically weaker and disadvantaged sections of society in the era of convergence.
- e. Create a knowledge rich society.

Recommendation – 5 ■ Human Resource Development

5.1 All Broadcasters are encouraged, in cooperation with international institutions to :-

- a. Regularly upgrade the skills, independence of reporting for different age groups of viewers, diversity of cultures and religions and impact of reports on current efforts to create one global society.
- b. Train personnel in all aspects of broadcasting.
- c. Develop an independent and voluntary code of ethics which reflects high professional standards and commitment to peace, fair and impartial reportage.

The Conference took note of the emerging concerns on the impact of content on national, regional and international happenings and mandated AIBD to work for :-

- a. An independent and neutral world broadcasting network to promote public service; peace, harmony and goodwill through credible coverage of world happenings; and promotion of plurality.
- b. Providing forum for interaction between broadcasters and policy makers to regularly debate issues of topical concern.
- c. Providing training in emerging areas of interest and how to take advantage of new technologies.
- d. Providing a forum to debate the changing mandate and objectives of Public Service Broadcasting in light of the emerging global environment.

