

Concept Note

Fourth UN Conference on LDCs

Pre-Conference Event – Digital Inclusion For Least Development Countries: *Innovation •Growth
•Sustainability*

8 – 9 March 2011

ITU Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

Introduction

It is less than 4 months before the 4th UN Conference on LDCs is held in Istanbul, Turkey from 9 to 13th May 2011. As agreed by the UN system organizations, specialized agencies and other relevant organizations, ITU is convening a Pre-Conference Event within its mandate to address the developmental role played by information and communication technologies (ICT) in least developed countries while implementing the Brussels Programme of Action. The event will also form part of our preparation process for LDC IV. The results of this consultative process will form part of our input into the LDC IV proceedings.

Least developed countries tend to be characterized by extreme poverty and structural weaknesses. Other challenges facing LDCs include limited access to education, health and other social services, depletion of natural resources, poor infrastructure and access to information and communication technologies. However, in terms of information and communication technologies, the number of telephone lines per hundred inhabitants and Internet penetration dramatically increased/improved over the past decade. This has mainly been due to improved political stability, low-cost wireless technologies, and an enabling environment. Recently, there have been some successes in LDCs as some of these countries have graduated from this category to become developing countries. ICTs have played a key role in the general development of most of the least developed countries since the impact of these technologies drive the rest of the sectors and help address some of the challenges that confront LDCs. For instance, ICTs go a long way in addressing extreme poverty, structural weaknesses of economies in LDCs, climate change impacts, and the general vulnerabilities of these countries that often expose them to immense infrastructure damage and loss of human lives due to natural disasters.

New technologies such as the Next Generation Networks and ITU flagship initiatives such as the Build on Broadband, are posed to make a huge difference in years to come for LDCs. The Pre-Conference meeting will share these emerging trends, best practices and lessons learnt, and attempt to identify obstacles and constraints that may frustrate socio-economic development in LDCs. Views will be shared by the LDCs themselves and development partners.

Objective and Approach

The Pre-Conference event seeks to explore strategies for enhancing accessibility in LDCs, taking into account best practices, opportunities and threats from various parts of the world. In this regard, the event will be interactive and representative of a broad range of stakeholders and viewpoints. The agenda will include presentations and discussions of global, regional and national dimensions of issues. All presentations will be followed by contributions from participants.

Expected Output

A shared understanding of the critical issues and identification of priorities for enhancing improved access to information and communication technologies to be carried over to the LDC IV Conference. It is hoped that these issues will be contained in the output document.

Participation

Participants in the Pre-Conference event will be Representatives of ITU Member States, UN Agencies, Multilateral/Bilateral Organizations with LDC focus and interest, Civil Society, NGOs, Experts and Policy Makers. Ministers will be invited to participate or be represented.

Languages

The Conference will be conducted in English only.

Venue

The Pre-Conference Event will be held on 8 and 9th March 2011, in Geneva at ITU in Room **K**. The event will be well displayed on ITU Screens for Meetings. More details could also be obtained at:

www.itu.int/itu-D/ldc/events.html