Developmental Aspects of the Internet

1. What are the developmental aspects of the Internet (for example, economic, social, regulatory and technical aspects), especially for developing countries?

The information and communications technology (ICT) including the Internet deals with, among others, storing, processing and transferring information in much faster, smaller, cheaper, better, and more secure manner, and with new opportunities for everyone. These features enable efficiency and effectiveness to all information based functions and activities. During the past decade or two the Internet has developed tremendously since its inception. It has become an important part of the basic infrastructure, like electricity, water, roads etc. It is the backbone and a major tool in contributing to the information society and digital economy. The outcomes speaks for themselves as it has enabled not only new products and services in the private and government sectors but has become a platform for co-creation and collaboration between different sectors, people and businesses both in developed and developing countries – though with different magnitudes. The Internet is seen as a gateway to many opportunities in different domains like economic, service provisions, social etc.

Internet services and increasing penetration rates, eventually contributing to the overall improvement of lifestyle and development of the country. Depending on the geography and size of the country, substantial investments become a prerequisite for vast infrastructure to cover the different regions of the country, including the rural infrastructure. Privatization of the service providers have contributed to the positive growth of the Internet, as they are more reactive to the social demands of technology and requirements. The contribution of knowledge through Internet has played a great role in human capital development and been a very positive influence in education domain.

2. How can governments and other stakeholders promote the developmental aspects of the Internet?

Both government and private sector play important roles in the development of the Internet of a country. While the policy authority for Internet-related public policy is the sovereign right of States and that they have rights and responsibilities for international Internet-related public policy issues, the private sector plays important role in the research and development of technologies, standards and processes (conforming to international public policy), and promoting capacity-building. It is very important that both work as seamless team players to achieve and deliver quality and excellent services to the end user. The importance of both aligned with the overall strategy is a key factor. There need to be more investments by the service providers and user's needs and requirements patterns and trends needs to be considered.

Even though there are high mobile penetration numbers with mobile Internet, there still remains room for improvement for basic broadband at home. Investments by service providers need to be increased to cover as much of area as possible, which is not an easy task if the geography of the country is large. Governments can introduce incentives for private sector to encourage and assist them in enlarging the radii of coverage. Lowering prices and increasing bandwidth are important points that need to be considered both by the service providers and government. Accessibility of Internet in rural or small towns away from cities will also contribute to the improvement of lifestyle and usage of government eServices. This is will also bring closer the gap between the digital divide. More integrated government eServices and mobile applications will drive the penetration rate even higher as the general direction of mobile Internet usage and services are on the rise.

3. *What are the challenges and opportunities?*

Coverage of area is probably one of the biggest challenge for the service providers and offering cheaper services with better quality. Threats to cybersecurity would also result from deliberate or accidental misuse of the Internet and its services. Such threats would usually have an unfavorable impact ranging from limited disturbances of Internet use, to catastrophic loss of valuable information and may be of other essential assets.

As mentioned earlier that economic opportunities are created by technology and has changed/improved a broad range of businesses. The Internet contributed in creating a new sector of Sharing Economy.

Governments can also utilize the increased usage of Internet for their advantages by providing more of their services online. This has reduced costs, saved service consumers time and made it possible for the eServices providing agencies to provide much better, quicker and improved services.

It is also a platform for innovation and creativity besides an economic opportunity generator. Collaboration between governments, private sector and public can be further enhanced with new products and services, resulting in improved economic efficiency and access to information. Hence consumers could access new innovative services.