

Chairman's Statement
of The FIRST ASEM ICT MINISTERIAL MEETING
(as of 30th November 2006)

1. The First ASEM Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Ministerial Meeting was held in Ha Noi on November 30th. The Meeting was attended by delegations from 29 ASEM members.
2. In line with the ASEM initiative on ICT cooperation, approved at the 5th ASEM Summit in Ha Noi in 2004, the Ministerial Meeting focused on “Promoting ICT applications in Human Resource Development and Capacity Building”, which was supported by ASEM leaders at the recent 6th ASEM Summit in September 2006 in Finland.
3. The Ministers noted the increasingly important role and far-reaching impacts of ICTs, as well as the need to enhance cooperation to fulfil their potential economic and societal contribution. They reiterated the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) on an information society for all, including “the desire to build ICT networks that are affordable and accessible to all, available anywhere and anytime, to anyone and on any device, leading to a ubiquitous network”, and further “a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilise and share information and knowledge to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life”.
4. The Ministers acknowledged the different levels of ICT development among ASEM members, particularly the digital divide between developed and developing countries. In this regard, cooperation in ASEM on promoting ICT applications represents an opportunity to close the gap as well as to foster the partnership between Asian and European countries.
5. The Ministers recognised the progress in using ICT in advancing skills, knowledge and practices, empowering local communities, enhancing enterprises' capabilities and promoting collaboration in education and research.
6. The Ministers appreciated the exchange and sharing of information and experience among ASEM member countries on the use of ICT in capacity building programmes. In this regard, the Ministers encouraged more cooperation and networking of educational facilities, particularly the link of universities and colleges between Asia and Europe. Regional and sub-regional e-Learning networks are urged to foster inter-regional collaboration to optimize the use of resources.
7. The Ministers noted the acknowledgement by our Leaders in the recent 6th ASEM Summit in Helsinki, Finland, of important role of Trans-EuroAsia Information Network (TEIN2) in extending connectivity between Asia and Europe in the fields for research and education and their support of its application in broader areas.
8. The Ministers appreciated the effort and active contribution of related organizations to the success of TEIN2 in consolidating the first large scale regional research and education network in Asia and its interconnection with the European network GEANT2. The Ministers encouraged enhancement of cooperation among stakeholders, with partners continuing to contribute to an extension of the current network's operation beyond 2007. Further, the Ministers supported an increased consideration for broader applications with high societal impact, seeking its expansion to other countries in the region.

9. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of ICT research co-operation among ASEM members and welcomed continuous effort from related organizations for joint research activities.

10. Ministers emphasized the need to facilitate close participation and more contribution by the ICT business community in developing and implementing ASEM ICT cooperative programmes and projects. The Ministers noted the update of business representatives on the latest developments relating to the evolution of ICT and services, and their observations and recommendations on policy and regulatory issues.

11. With respect to the development of the ICT industry in recent years, the Ministers encouraged the ICT community to accelerate the expansion and provision of ICT services in remote and isolated areas, ensuring the sustainable development and bridging the digital divide between rural and urban areas. This would eventually facilitate the applications of ICT in human resource development in all ASEM countries.

12. In this context, Ministers agreed on the importance of working together to support initiatives to empower users so as to effectively pull new information tools and services in response to outstanding needs. Examples of areas include training and the exchange of experience in support of improved accessibility to health services, and ensuring transparent and reliable money transfers including international remittances and micro credit.

13. Ministers welcomed joint efforts on network security, digital interoperability and convergence, and ICT enabled public services. They encouraged further initiatives to enable authentication, traceability and verifiability in e-transactions, and achieving trust and integrity for the individual user.

14. The Ministers shared the intention to give priority to action-oriented work programmes. They welcomed innovative and flexible approaches so as to facilitate the engagement of relevant stakeholders. In this context, existing mechanisms for bilateral and regional cooperation can serve as an important platform. Appropriate broad-based consultation on proposed activities and the identification of project coordinators may, following the Ministerial Meeting, result in more detailed roadmaps spelling out implementation and reporting mechanisms. The list of activities is attached to this document.

15. Regarding future ASEM cooperation in ICT, the Ministers agreed, in principle, to convene the Senior Officials Meeting annually to follow up on progress and to meet again at Ministerial level.

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

(Annex to the Chairman's Statement)

The ASEM ICT Ministers welcomed the following activities and encouraged further actions and involvement by stakeholders to realize their potential:

Improving ICT Policy and Regulatory Environment

1. Strengthening and encouraging the information and experiences sharing of ASEM countries' ICT policy and legal framework for Human Resource Development (HRD) and capacity building;
2. Promoting the development of best practices of HRD and capacity-building on the common policy, particularly through the collaboration of regional organizations, such as the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat;

3. Promoting training and capacity building for ASEM policy and regulatory officials to encourage:
 - i. Good policy and regulatory practices
 - ii. Competitive ICT markets
 - iii. Widespread access to ICTparticularly in the areas of broadband (wired and wireless) policy, NGN migration, RFID, etc.;
4. Joint development by public and private sectors to strengthen public awareness and understanding of ICT as well as programmes for ICT HRD;
5. Enhancing the collaboration and performance of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) within ASEM by establishing contact points between ASEM CERTs, and through activities such as Asia-Europe CERT drills;

Enhancement of ICT Enterprises' Capability

6. Fostering business linkages towards strengthening the capacity of the ICT enterprises to face the new challenges of the present and future globalized business environment through dialogue between the Ministers and the ASEM ICT business community;
7. Acknowledging the value of continued bilateral or multilateral training programmes as a means of capacity-building on ICT;

Cooperation of Research Institutes and Educational Facilities

8. Commending and recognizing the comprehensive work undertaken by the large-scale network initiatives such as TEIN2 in the fields of research, education and other applications;
9. Taking advantage of regional programmes such as the Asia-Link Program, regional ICT-Asia programmes or related networks to optimise synergies with other regional or multilateral initiatives currently undertaken;
10. Enhancing ASEM ICT research co-operation through programmes such as the European ICT research programme which is part of the Science & Technology Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) to be launched beginning of 2007. To this purpose, research ICT workshops will be organised to raise awareness on the possibilities;

Empowering Local Community in ICT Applications

11. Devising public-private partnerships for the application of new business models so as to create locally-adapted and commercially-driven business models to shape low cost mobile communication solutions in underserved areas;
12. Activating schools and local communities in formulating and implementing approaches to make use of ICT in primary education, bearing in mind cultural and multi-linguistic societies, for raising literacy and other basic skills;
13. Decreasing the information gap and bridging the digital divide of farmer communities by introducing e-agricultural information-exchanging networks;

14. Working with relevant stakeholders, such as diaspora, local communities, operators and banks, to articulate the demand for the development and diffusion of simple information tools, such as SMS-driven applications to fulfil the development contribution of remittances, micro-finance and mobile banking;
15. Strengthening cooperation between Asia and Europe to secure authentication, traceability and verifiability in digital transactions, and achieving trust and integrity for the individual user;
16. Considering how local communities can be put in the driver's seat to pull more relevant primary healthcare in rural areas, using ICT for distance learning and to enhance links between local health centres and central hospitals with specialist facilities.