Evaluation summary of the outcome of the first session of the
Committee on Information and Communications Technology
19-21 November 2008
Bangkok

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The first session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology was held from 19-21 November 2008 in Bangkok and was attended by 17 ESCAP members and associate members. In order for the secretariat to obtain feedback on the process and outcome of the session, an evaluation questionnaire was distributed to heads of delegations on the first day of the session. Responses, which constitute the basis for the following assessment, were received from 14 of the 17 attending members (82.3%). Results are expressed as a percentage of the delegations that responded.

PART I: QUALITY OF PREPARATIONS, DELIBERATIONS & OUTCOME

Section 1: Effectiveness

1. Sixty-four per cent of the delegations indicated that the Committee achieved 'to a great extent' the expected outcomes through its deliberations on agenda item 4 'World Summit on the Information Society five years on: Information and communications technology for inclusive development', and 36% of the delegations thought the expected outcomes were met 'to a reasonable extent'. One delegation stated that all discussions and deliberations on agenda item 4 provided the Committee with more options and resulted in greater commitment from member countries. One delegation stated that the document E/ESCAP/CICT/INF/1 was especially informative. One delegation stated that more quantifiable recommendations could have been made.

2. The feedback was very positive concerning deliberations under agenda item 5 on information and communications technology-enabled disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific. Under this agenda item, seventy-one per cent of delegations considered that the deliberations met expected outcomes 'to a great extent', and 29% 'to a reasonable extent'. One delegation stated that the outcome of the agenda item was excellent and that it wished that representatives from OCHA were also present to the session to update the participants on the work being done in the region.

3. With regard to agenda item 6 on 'strategy of regional institutions on information and communications technology', fifty-seven per cent of the delegations considered that the deliberations to have met the expected outcomes 'to a great extent', and the remainder (43%) 'to a reasonable extent'. One delegation noted the greater commitment given by APCICT and APCTT on capacity building and knowledge transfer topics.

4. On matters concerning outputs for the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011 in respect of the subprogramme on ICT, feedback was generally positive, with 64% of respondents considering that deliberations provided guidance to the secretariat 'to a reasonable extent', and 36% 'to a great extent'. One delegation stated that the deliberations were very fruitful and did outline desired outputs.

Section 2: Relevance & Efficiency

5.   The feedback on the general substantive servicing of the meeting by the Secretariat was largely positive. All delegations "fully agreed" (57%) or "partially agreed" (43%) that their understanding of regional experiences and policy options related to ICT issues had significantly benefited from the discussions during the Committee session. One delegation stated that it would like the secretariat to specify the relationship and the different roles of the Committee on ICT and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction.

6.   A high majority of delegations (79%) 'fully agreed' that the agenda items were timely and relevant to issues and trends regarding ICT issues in the ESCAP region and the remainder (21%) 'partially agreed'.

7.   A high majority of delegations (86%) 'fully agreed' that the pre-session documents conveyed clear messages concerning the issues placed on the agenda, while the remainder (14%) 'partially agreed'.

8.   With regard the timely submission of pre-session documents, 36% 'fully agreed' on their timely submission, and the majority 'partially agreed' (64%).

9.   A majority of delegations (79%) fully agreed that the secretariat's in-session interventions contributed to productive discussion and effective decision-making and recommendations by the Committee, with the remaining 21% 'partially agreeing'.

10.   A high majority of delegations (86%) 'fully agreed' that the draft report adequately reflected the discussion, decisions and recommendations of the Committee, with the remaining 14% 'partially agreeing'.

PART II: FORMAT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICING BY THE SECRETARIAT

11.   Almost all delegations (94%) found the duration of the agenda item on 'World Summit on the Information Society five years on: Information and communications technology for inclusive development' to be an 'appropriate length' with one delegation not providing feedback to this question.

12.   A majority of the delegations (86%) found the duration of the agenda item 5 on 'Information and communications technology-enabled disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific' to be an 'appropriate length', while 14% found it 'too short'.

13.   Regarding agenda item 6 on 'strategy of regional institutions on information and communications technology', a majority of the delegates (79%) found its duration to be an 'appropriate length', while 7% found it 'too short' and 14% 'too long'.

14.   Half of delegations found to be excellent the level of conference servicing by the secretariat to facilitate smooth conduct of the session, while the other half found it to be good.

PART III: IMPROVEMENT OF FUTURE SESSIONS

15.   One delegation stated that the Committee session was excellent and did not require further improvement. One delegation commended the secretariat and stated that the session was very well organized. Another delegation appreciated the effective and smooth manner that the session was conducted.

16.   Six of the 14 delegations provided additional comments and suggestions on how future sessions of the Committee could be improved. The comments can be summarized as follows:

- One delegation stated that the recommendations proposed in the documents should be given more detailed elaboration to help the delegates to better understand relevant background and make proper decisions.
- One delegation stated that greater participation from the capital would be encouraged by timely delivery of background papers and by requesting inputs from the countries.
- One delegation stated that all discussions must ultimately result in concrete actionable points/strategy, such as a clear roadmap with milestones.
- One delegation stated that it would be appreciated if the expenses of the participants attending future sessions of the Committee could be partially or fully covered by hosting countries or the secretariat. Another delegation suggested the secretariat to explore funding alternatives for supporting the participation of delegations.
- One delegation stated that it would be appreciated if the secretariat could send the background documents to the delegations in advance through email.
- One delegation suggested the organization of training/workshops on how governments could benefit from the United Nations conferences, to provide government officials from the capital a better understanding of multilateral conferences, which would result in a better utilization of the regional organizations, including ESCAP.

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