

**First Meeting of the Drafting Group
for Developing the Action Plan 2022-2026
of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS)
Hybrid Meeting**

25 May 2021 (Tuesday), 13:00-16:00 (Bangkok time)

Concept Note (First Draft)

1. Overview

In the coming decade, emerging technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, big data, robotics, and the Internet of things will drive digital transformation. It is estimated that 70 per cent of new economic value will be created over the next ten years on digitally enabled platforms and that by 2022 over 60 per cent of global GDP will be digitized.¹

Yet, only half of the Asia-Pacific population has Internet access, and this growth is slowing. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics, out of the 4.6 billion inhabitants in Asia and the Pacific, only 13 per cent (598 million) have fixed-broadband subscriptions. Within ESCAP subregions, in South and South-West Asia and South-East Asia, only 3 per cent (53 million) and 6 per cent (43 million) of the population have fixed-broadband subscriptions, respectively. In Pacific developing countries (excluding Australia and New Zealand), less than 1 per cent of the 12 million inhabitants have fixed-broadband subscriptions.

In addition, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore new digital divides and development inequalities in the Asia-Pacific region. While the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic vary within and across the region, a common feature of the regional experience is that digital readiness, universal broadband connectivity, and digital capacity have played a key role in containing the contagion, mitigating the devastating socio-economic impacts, and preparing for building back with more resilience.

1.1 Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway platform

In light of these challenges, the ESCAP secretariat is supporting Asia-Pacific regional cooperation on strengthening digital connectivity to bridge the digital divide through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) platform.

1.2 Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation

At the Third Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation (CICTSTI-3), held in August 2020, the Committee recommended that the secretariat set up a drafting group as part of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee to develop an action plan for the next phase of implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, for 2022–2026, for consideration and adoption by the Committee at its fourth session in 2022.² The action plan will act as a regional blueprint for cooperative actions and a guide for promoting digital connectivity and digital transformation towards a more inclusive digital economy.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/platforms/shaping-the-future-of-digital-economy-and-new-value-creation>

² <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Final%20report%20CICTSTI3%2C%20English.pdf>

In response, the ESCAP secretariat plans to organize meetings of the drafting group in 2021 to support member States to consult and finalize a draft action plan, which contains a set of prioritized actions. The draft AP-IS action plan (2022-2026) is expected to promote regional cooperative actions for advancing digital connectivity and bridging the digital divide, as well as promoting digital transformation, and the use of digital data in the region.

2. Objectives

To develop the draft action plan of the AP-IS 2022-2026 and key priority areas.

3. Key Outputs

- The first draft on AP-IS action plan framework 2022-2026
- Matrix of actions 2022-2026

4. Invited Participants

- Main participants: representatives of all members and associate members of the Commission consisting of senior government officials from the Ministry of Communications/Technology, ICT experts, and regulators.

5. Mode and Date

Hybrid mode on 25 May 2021 (Tuesday)

- Representatives from Thailand: UNCC (Conference Room 3)
- Representatives outside Thailand: on-line mode through Microsoft Teams application.

6. Invitation / Registration Process

- Participants are requested to complete online registration no later than 1 May 2021 at <https://www.unescap.org/events/2021/first-meeting-drafting-group-developing-action-plan-2022-2026-asia-pacific-information>.
- Participants can access to the meeting's documents at the same link.
- Participants are kindly requested to submit the **nomination letter** issued by the Seat of Government³ of participants to the ESCAP secretariat (at email: escap-ids@un.org) no later than 1 May 2021.

7. Interpretation

The meeting will be conducted in English only.

Contact Information

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³ In most cases, the Seats of Government is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of member State.

[Annex]

Tentative Programme (First Draft)

The First Meeting of the Drafting Group for Developing the Action Plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Hybrid Meeting, 25 May 2021, 13:00-16:00 (Bangkok time)	
13:00-13:05	Session 1: Opening Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Moderator: Mr. Tae Hyung Kim, Chief, ICT and Development Section, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming Remark by Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP
13:05-13:20	Session 2: Election of Bureau <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elect 1 Chair and 2 Vice Chairs• Chair's remark
13:20-14:20	Session 3: Draft Action Plan Framework 2022-2026 of AP-IS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presented by the ESCAP secretariat (10 minutes)<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Framework of the draft action plan including proposed pillars and prioritized focus.• Discussions
14:20-15:55	Session 4: Matrix of Actions 2022-2026 of AP-IS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presented by the ESCAP secretariat (10 minutes)<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ First draft set of proposed actions• Discussions
15:55-16:00	Session 5: Future Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next drafting group meeting