

Side Event at the 80th Session of the Commission

Digital Public Infrastructure for Accelerating Implementation of SDGs in Asia-Pacific

22 April 2024 (13:15 – 14:15 Bangkok time)

Meeting Room – H, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok

Background

Despite considerable progress in certain areas, implementation of SDGs in Asia and the Pacific remain uneven and inadequate. At the current pace, the Asia-Pacific region will miss 90 per cent of the 118 measurable SDG targets by 2030, unless efforts are multiplied.¹ While there are persisting challenges in form of inequality, gender and rural-urban divides, there are also encouraging success stories that underline how digital solutions, data-driven approach towards decision-making, and targeted interventions can lead to transformative change in the pace of implementation of SDGs. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has been widely recognised as a powerful enabler in this context.

DPI is described as a set of shared digital systems that are secure and interoperable and can be built on open standards and specifications to deliver and provide equitable access to public and/ or private services at societal scale. These are governed by applicable legal frameworks and enabling rules to drive development, inclusion, innovation, trust, and competition and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.²

Digital transformation at societal scale calls for moving away from the conventional approach of seeking specific digital solution for each problem, to DPI approach based on scalability, interoperability, and transparency to maximize the impacts of digital technologies and reducing inherent risks that these technologies bring. Robust technology, coupled with transparent, accountable, and participatory governance fostering innovation, are key to this approach. There is also felt need to adopt secure and inclusive approach that respect protect personal data, privacy, and intellectual property rights while developing, deploying, and governing DPI.

¹ Asia & the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2023, UNESCAP

² G20 consensus on DPI in Digital Economy Ministerial Declaration, , under the India Presidency in 2023

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DPI demonstrated its effectiveness by enabling easier access and delivery of services through innovative solutions. India, during its G20 Presidency last year, took initiatives to shine light on potential of DPI in unlocking innovation for sustainable development, and invigorated further deliberations on this matter. At the 80th Session of the Commission, India seeks to provide a forum for further focused discussion and sharing of experience among multiple stakeholders on this issue.

Objective

The objective of the side event is to further explore the role DPI can play in enabling achievement of various SDG targets in Asia and the Pacific. The discussion seeks shine light on mature and emerging DPI systems in the region, how to scale up various digital solutions and break silos, addressing disparity within and among countries in accessing to appropriate technology as well as ways to address regulatory and normative challenges, and how to build capacity, provide technical assistance, and adequate financing for implementing robust, safe, and inclusive DPI in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Program

13:15 - 13:20	Introduction & moderation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Preeti Soni, Head, Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT)
13:20 - 13:25	Opening Address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Nagesh Singh, Ambassador of India to Thailand and Permanent Representative to UNESCAP
13:25 - 13:30	Keynote Address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Hirohito Toda, Deputy Executive Secretary for Partnerships and Coordination,, UNESCAP
13:30 - 13:35	Special Address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, Government of India (Virtual)
Panel Discussion moderated by Ms. Preeti Soni, Head, APCTT	
13:35 - 13:43	Presentation by Mr. Surinder Pal Singh , Joint Secretary, Department of Scientific & Industrial Research, on “Impact of Digital Public Infrastructure on Sustainable Development in India”
13:43 - 13:51	Presentation/Intervention by Mr. Steve Olive , Mission Director for the Regional Development Mission for Asia, USAID
13:51 - 13:59	Presentation by Mr. Nagaraj Prasadh , Country Head, Intellect Design Arena Ltd.

13:59 - 14:07	Presentation/Intervention by Mr. Ashish Narayan, Programme Coordinator, International Telecom Union
14:07 - 14:12	Q&A
14:12 - 14:15	Concluding remarks by Ms. Preeti Soni , Head, APCTT
