

ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility

ASEAN Information and Communication Technology: Building a Connected, Vibrant and Secure Community

Executive Summary



Information Communication Technology (ICT) is critical to ASEAN's competitiveness and is also an important economic sector in its own right. ASEAN countries have competitive advantages ranging from labor intensive call centers to highly skilled ICT business services. Many have successfully developed niche export industries in these services.

Reflecting the importance of ICT, ASEAN has formed a sector specific agreement on ICT (the E-ASEAN Framework Agreement of 2000) and has named ICT one of eleven priority sectors for economic integration. These agreements contain about 70 actionable items in five strategic areas. Each year, ASEAN's telecommunications and IT Ministers meet to review accomplishments and to establish priorities for the coming year. In 2007, ASEAN's theme, as adopted by Ministers at Seam Reap, Cambodia, is extending access into rural areas.

ASEAN's strategic thrusts and recent accomplishments in ICT include:

1) ASEAN Information Infrastructure

- A memorandum of understanding to construct the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Superhighway Network;
- Annual computer emergency response drills;
- Frequency allocation plans for radio frequency identification devices;
- Programs to develop next generation networks and for convergence.

2) E-commerce and ICT trade facilitation

- A Reference Framework for E-Commerce Legal Infrastructure;
- A voluntary mutual recognition agreement (MRA) for telecommunications equipment and several bilateral MRAs.

3) Building an E-Society and Reducing the Digital Divide

- Capacity building programs for the least ICT-enabled members;
- Regional activities to promote e-learning and a knowledge-based e-ASEAN.



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4) Universal Access and E-Government

- Numerous programs for e-government;
- An agreement to establish an ASEAN single window for processing goods through customs;
- An agreement to strengthen universal programs and to develop best practice guidelines and improved regulatory frameworks for extending access into rural areas.

5) Economic Integration

- Commitments by all Members on telecommunications, ICT and computer business services under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services;
- Commitments on market opening measures for foreign investment in ICT;
- Planned adoption of the WTO reference paper on basic telecommunications by most members.

ASEAN is supported in its various ICT activities by its Dialogue Partners. ASEAN's Dialogue Partners in Asia are China, Japan, Korea, and India. Each of these countries has a specific ICT agreement with ASEAN, and annual programs of work and formal reviews. ASEAN's ICT activities with the United States fall under the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership Agreement. ASEAN has also established its own internally funded ICT Center in order to assist in the implementation of its programs.