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ESCAP MESSAGE:

**Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, United Nations Under Secretary-General
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

Delivered by

Ms. Hyeun-Suk Rhee, Director, ESCAP/APCICT

Excellency Hyung-Kyu Maeng and Hyong-O Kim,

Distinguished experts,

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to deliver a message to you on behalf of Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, United Nations Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, who due to pressing prior commitments regrets her inability to be present in person today.

Quote

Excellencies,

Distinguished experts,

I am very pleased by the successful collaboration that has evolved between the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS) of the Republic of Korea, the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) under the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in organizing this meeting. This represents a continuum of cooperation that was initiated some time ago and I hope that it will continue to grow from strength to strength as we strive towards our common endeavor to bring the benefits of the IT revolution to all.

Excellencies,

A broad-based dialogue on the way public services are facilitated or delivered electronically including through the internet, making use of the best that cutting edge technologies and infrastructure can offer, is now an integral part of development efforts. In this context, I warmly welcome Chief Information Officers (CIOs), other e-Government officials and experts drawn from various sectors, including academia and the private sector to this forum.

The times we live in are certainly exciting, but they are also characterized by new challenges of considerable proportions.

We recognize that ICT innovations have an endless capacity to intrigue us. For one, the internet has opened the doors to an unlimited supply of content- rich materials accessible at previously unimaginable speeds, which empowers us to transform the way we go about our routine activities – from the analysis and delivery of education, health and financial services to the way information is leveraged for betterment of knowledge, to how people connect and interact with each other and access public services through e-Government.

This, however, is only part of the story, and lest technology-driven optimism induce policy complacency, it is important to recognize that despite the presence here today of Asia-Pacific countries at the forefront of the ICT revolution, the digital and innovation divide is increasing: within countries, it's between urban and rural areas, within the region the divide is widening between the LDCs, LLDCs and Pacific island states on the one hand, and the middle and high income countries on the other.

Natural disasters, of an increasing frequency and scale, are reversing development gains and contributing to the gap between the globally connected and the locally disconnected. The magnitude of the disaster suffered by Japan remains with us, reminding us of the threat posed by disaster to all of our development efforts

Given that there is an increase in demand for public services immediately following natural disasters, achieving effective outcomes in public administration has become ever more challenging.

Nevertheless, technologies have come a long way in the last few years, and high-speed broadband infrastructure, including 4G and wireless communications hold promise that e-Government will soon become m-Government and open up a vast array of service delivery innovations that will truly put the power of information in the hands of the users.

And yet, even this may not be enough. The current e-Government discourse on the promise of ICTs needs to be complemented by policies that address equity and social justice objectives for a more inclusive development process, so that people in remote and IT-underserved areas can also acquire the skills and capacities to benefit from the vast opportunities presented by the information and knowledge age. As they say, technologies are only as good as the people who use it.

Formulating, implementing and assessing more successful strategies for ICT-enabled public service delivery will contribute to improvements in these areas and enhancing the overall quality of life indicators.

I am confident that your discussions over the next three days will take these dimensions and challenges into consideration and will result in a better understanding of the regional, subregional and country specific e-Government experiences.

I wish you all success in your deliberations.

Thus ends the message from Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary, UN
ESCAP.