FINAL REPORT
OF THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF IPAIT

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The Second General Assembly of
the International Parliamentarians' Association
for Information Technology (IPAIT II)
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FINAL REPORT

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I. Background and Introduction

1. The International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology (IPAIT) was established after parliamentarians involved in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) from many countries met informally in Taiwan in 2001.

2. The Inaugural Assembly of the Association (IPAIT I) was held from 23 to 26 July 2002 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, with the theme of "Bridging the Digital Divide in the Information Society". Participating in the conference were 86 representatives from parliaments of 35 countries, including a 14-member Thai delegation comprising members of the House of Representatives, members of the Senate, and ICT experts. The main objective of the Assembly was to enable member countries to present and discuss ways of utilizing ICT to increase efficiency in the management of parliament, to raise the standard of living of the people; and to bridge the digital divide. Conference activities included the presentation of country reports which outlined progress and goals in the application of ICT in member countries, and the exchange of ideas in panel discussion groups. The panels discussed the themes: e-Government and the Social Divide; e-Business and the Economic Divide; and e-Education and the Education Divide. The following is a summary of the Inaugural Assembly conclusions:

    2.1 The development of information technology (IT) is an important mechanism for the acceleration of knowledge acquisition in society.

2.2 Information Technology is the determining factor in all dimensions of development. Therefore, exchange of information in IT is necessary for the promotion of better understanding between nations of different cultures.

2.3 Quality human resources are essential for economic growth and information technology development.

2.4 The Digital Divide between developed and developing countries leads to a loss in the developing countries' competitiveness and must be narrowed if not eliminated.

2.5 Parliaments should design national policy to address the "Education Divide" among citizens and to create e-learning programmes to help narrow the gap.

2.6 The Assembly also called on members to develop action plans to reduce international education inequality for submission to future World Summit on Information Society Conferences to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2003, and in Tunisia in 2005.

Thailand's Contribution to IPAIT I

3. Proposed cooperation among member parliaments in the following five major areas:

3.1 Lingual Conversion Tools: to develop basic lingual conversion tools to translate languages into the national language, so as to support development in e-Government, e-Commerce, e-Business, and e-Education. In addition, the tools would help overcome language barriers in the various regions and be useful for progress in e-Development in general.

3.2 Regional Knowledge Portal: to create a regional knowledge portal to manage important data and information via websites. This will lead to collaboration in the development of e-Government, e-Commerce, e-Business and E-Education, as well as to investment in ICT, agriculture and tourism industries in each region.

3.3 Internet Super-Gateways: to establish Internet Super-Gateways in order to provide high speed connectivity among all the members. This would also enable less developed countries to reap the benefits of modern ICT. The connections must also be well maintained and upgraded continuously to meet future needs.

3.4 Resource enhancement for e-Learning in IPAIT countries: to cooperate at the regional level to develop e-learning educational infrastructure, such as educational databases, and electronic teaching and learning materials. These would be shared among IPAIT members at reasonable prices. Also, these resources should be available to schools without access fees.

3.5 IPAIT professional development programmes: to establish an IPAIT professional development programme through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The aim is to enable further progress in e-activities, especially in furthering the goal of e-Parliament. The cooperation should involve training courses, consultations, and observation visits, all which would ultimately lead to the exchange of technologies. Such professional development programmes could also be developed in e-Commerce, e-Business, and e-Education to build up a critical mass in human resources.

4. Dr. Wiboon Shamshuen, a Member of the Thai Senate, was elected as Vice-President of IPAIT. Mrs. Huh Unna, Member of the Korean Senate was elected President. (She now does not hold this position as she is no longer a Member of Parliament.)

5. The Assembly unanimously accepted Thailand as host country for the next IPAIT Conference.

II. The IPAIT II General Assembly

The objectives of the IPAIT II General Assembly are as follows:

1. To provide members of parliaments with the opportunity to share experience and expertise in the development of ICT in e-Parliament, e-Education, e-Society, e-Government, e-Commerce and e-Industry;

2. To promote cooperation among members of parliaments to address the problem of unequal access to information and data, especially in the fields of business, commerce, education, public health, social affairs, and the environment;

3. To enhance cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels between parliamentarians and between parliaments;

4. To organize and exhibition to honour the institution of the Thai Monarchy for their Majesties' active contribution to the utilization of information and communication technology in many development programmes, as well as to exhibit progress in the application of ICT by the Thai Parliament and other governmental agencies.

Issues Discussed in IPAIT II

1. The main issue**:** how to enhance digital opportunities for individual citizens through e-Parliament and information and communication technology development (ICT-D). This is to be done through cooperative efforts of IPAIT members in the sharing of knowledge on technologies, ICT laws, and basic information infrastructure.

2. Other issues: how to promote the use of ICT in six key sectors: namely, e-Parliament, e-Government, e-Education, e-Society, e-Commence and e-Industry. Progress in these areas will expand digital opportunities for citizens.

3. The Framework of the IPAIT II General Assembly. Four panel discussion groups were organized on the following themes:

    3.1 E-Parliament: The expansion of opportunities for citizens and members of parliaments to access information and data required in the performance of their civic responsibilities.

    3.2 E-Government: The reform of the delivery of governmental services to utilize more ICT. Also, the encouragement by government of more applications of ICT in areas which will improve the nation's competitiveness in today's rapid trend towards a knowledge-based global economy.

    3.3 E-Education: The development of ICT-capable human resources by using ICT to assist in educational processes and in the production of e-Learning educational programmes. E-Society: The alleviation of the problem of unequal access to information and knowledge in society, in order to improve the quality of life of the people.

    3.4 E-Commerce: The reform of the commercial system, to enable more use of e-Commerce. E-Industry: The encouragement of ICT utilization in manufacturing and marketing.

Expected Outcomes of IPAIT II

- A Bangkok Declaration on planned IPAIT projects;
- A Joint Communiqué detailing IPAIT vision and goals;
- Expansion of cooperation among IPAIT member countries on ICT, both at the multilateral and bilateral levels;
- Enhancement of the people's awareness of and participation in e-Parliament development and ICT in general;
- Reporting on the progress made by governmental agencies and parliaments in the utilization of ICT.

III. Progress and Problems in Some IPAIT Countries

Below are the highlights of the country reports that were presented by delegates, to illustrate both common issues and those unique to each country due to their different stages of economic and social development, and their different geography. The country reports and summary of the panel discussions can be seen in the appendix. Quotes presented below are taken from the country reports. LDC means less developed countries in this report.

3.1 Angola

1. Angola's country report notes that "The development of information and communication technology is quite new to the National Assembly of Angola due to its recent institution." Development of ICT began in early 1990s, after the multi-party elections of 1992. In 1995, the Angolan Parliament undertook efforts to accelerate the application of ICT in its parliamentary operations. A Centre of Information was set up to advise on the electronic management of the various tasks of parliament. And the Parliament now has its own website (www.parliamenta.ao), and a system of sharing electronic files between different executive branches and legislative organizations.

2. International collaboration with United Nations Division of Public Administration and Management of Development (UNDESA) in a two-year project financed by the Italian Government began in 2004. The project called "Regional Initiative – Reinforcement of the Information System of the Parliament of Africa," aims at promoting the use of ICT in eight African Parliaments including Angola, especially in:
    - improving parliamentary services to facilitate access to parliamentary documents by citizens and increase interaction with them;
    - developing ICT skills of parliamentary staff and persons who deal with parliament;
    - creating a parliamentary information system to manage the complete cycle of parliamentary activities using the digital format;

- establishing an electronic parliamentary administrative and accountancy management system, to control its budget and also to oversee the state budget.

3. Also included in this modernization project is a plan to use ICT to expand contacts among the eight Parliaments. The project is quite comprehensive and detailed, covering all key aspects of e-Parliament development.

4. Emphasis is also given to improve the quality and quantity of information of web pages of the Parliament's website "to put it at the same level as … that of the other Parliaments."

5. The approach is regional and with an international assistance dimension. This means Angola can benefit from the latest and most appropriate ICTs available, subject to financial constraints.

6. Thus, the Angolan case is an example of a determined effort by a young parliament to lay a strong foundation for e-Parliament growth. A key aspiration being:

   "to improve the participation of civil society in the activities of parliament."

3.2 Brazil

1. For Brazil, a major parliamentary concern, as expressed in its country report, is in essence the exclusion of large and poorer sections of the world's population from the benefits of ICT. Because the developed countries are better equipped to exploit the benefits of ICT, this tends to worsen the existing social and economic inequalities between the developed and less developed countries (LDC). Brazil sees a major role of parliamentarians being to work actively and urgently to "promote digital inclusion for all" in order to redress what Brazil calls "social exclusion at the global level." This concern has been given institutional expression by the support to the concept of digital inclusion given by the Council of Advanced Studies and Technological Assessment of the Brazilian Chamber of

Representatives. In addition, a Parliamentary Information Front of Brazil has been created to work on the politics of sustainable technological development.

2. The problem is seen not as merely scientific or a matter of finding and installing the right technology, but more so as one of political activity. There has to be urgency in promoting digital inclusion because "new technologies have become a realistic option and a basic citizen requirement," not a luxury.

3. Brazil thus urges parliaments to work to redress international imbalances which are made worse by the global digital divide, by engaging in "the politics of digital inclusion at the world level." The key problems are defined as "digital illiteracy and technological exclusion of vast portions of humanity." And the overall goal of parliamentarians should be:

> "To enable citizens regardless of his or her capacity or national origin to have free access to modern computers and telecommunications."

3.3 China

1. China is firmly on the road to sustained development of information and communication technology, which is seen as a crucial factor in improving productivity, economic growth, and the quality of life in general.

2. China's information network has been fully digitized; and in March 2004, fixed phone users numbered 280 million, mobile phone users numbered 290 million and Internet users 80 million. Because China is a large developing country (in terms of geographical size) there exist inequalities in terms of ICT usage, especially between eastern and western China, and between the urban and rural areas. Thus, ICT development has been uneven.

3. Because of its orientation towards a market economy and open international trade and investment, China now has six operators of basic telecommunication services and thousands of private companies operating in related services. In addition, information networks dedicated to government functions have been

established, for example, networks for customs, taxes and government administrative departments.

4. It is government policy to encourage foreign investment in the Chinese information technology (IT) industry, both in terms of financial capital and technology transfer, seeing it as an important support to industrialization and manufacturing growth.

5. Given the rapid growth in ICT utilization in the Chinese economy, and in order to provide for orderly market growth, China has been improving the state regulatory framework. The Chinese Parliament is in the process of reforming laws and regulations, such as the telecommunications law, e-Signature law, Internet security law, management regulations, and rules on Internet access by minors.

6. The Chinese Parliament does aim to use information technology in all areas of its work. At present, an internal office information network for parliament exists, to facilitate internal voting, elections, and document circulation. Members of Parliament have their own e-mail address for two-way interaction with their constituencies, but improvement is needed to increase network speed and bandwidth. A website, www.npc.gov.cv, is open to the public and provides parliamentary information.

7. Another challenge is how to use laws and regulations to lessen the potentially destabilizing social effects of wider Internet access among the people, especially the young.

8. Thus, the Chinese case represents a determined attempt by the political leadership to harness ICT to further ambitious development goals, while at the same time seeking for ways to minimize the negative social implications of ICT, including the regional digital divide.

3.4 Croatia

1. E-Parliament in Croatia is well developed in terms of programmes and laws. The country benefits from its close links with European Union initiatives. The Action Plan for e-Europe, accepted by all European Union members, form the basis of Croatian e-Government policy, a summary of which is contained in two documents, "e-Croatia" and "Project e-Croatia 2007." The goals for e-Parliament in Croatia are:
    - to enable citizens to receive information from the state efficiently;
    - to improve Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumers (B2C) communications;
    - to deliver governmental services in a transparent manner.

2. Internet users comprise more than 26 % of Croatia's population, most of them being employees of the state, businesspersons, students and researchers. Two percent are broadband users, while the majority relies on dial-up analogue or ISDN modem access.

3. Enhancing digital opportunities for citizens is done by using ICT to develop e-Education programmes and lifelong learning. Training in ICT for state employees is conducted by private firms which are contracted to install hardware for government offices; in Croatia e-installation is generally done by private firms through a system of bids.

4. Standard accounting formats are to be used for all public offices, and public disclosure of state and municipal budgets through the Internet is a key element, in order to produce transparency and expose unnecessary expenses (or "padding").

5. A registry of online public requests from government offices is planned, as well as one from the Ministry of Justice, so that the state can find out directly from the people what the problems, drawbacks and dissatisfactions are in

government-citizen relations, and also in the court system. Thus, online feedback is a tool for problem correction.

6. An introduction of personal ID cards with protection of privacy is also in the plan, in order to provide services to citizens efficiently. The ID card which contains many sets of personal data is also designed to enable automatic interchange of data among various governmental agencies so that servicing the citizen can be done efficiently. In addition, such interchange works as a checking device against fraud, as well as improving tax collection.

7. Documents and procedures of the government offices are standardized, and forms are available online. A large number of state and municipal offices have online services for businesses and citizens, ranging from financial facilities to administering the affairs of pensioners.

3.5 Finland

1. Finland is known as a global leader in ICT development, and much of the information infrastructure planned by LDCs is already in place. Finland's concerns therefore are on issues quite different from those of LDCs.

2. Finland's concern is the shape and nature of Finnish information society in the future, given the widespread availability of information technology and its pervasive influence on the daily lives of its citizens. A Committee for the Future has been set up by the Parliament to address the issue. It concluded that a condition of success in an information society is the creativity of the members of society, and this is made possible to a large extent by new technologies. Thus, new technologies must be made accessible to all sections of society, so citizens can use it to create new products and services and drive Finland to a higher quality information society.

3. As a result of widespread data collection both by the state and private businesses, and its impact on citizen's privacy and security, The Finnish

Parliament is currently considering a new law to protect the privacy of electronic personal data. The issue is, to quote the country report:

> "What information concerning our e-mails and phone calls or web browsing will be totally private, what will be available to authorities and when, what the operators [private firms] can and must do to the data concerning us and whether or not we [the citizens] should be allowed to know why information about our communications has been given to the authorities"

4. Similar to other countries, unequal ICT access also exists in Finland, and the fear is the creation of a new class system, a "national, hereditary digital divide," which as time goes by might lock in a section of the population to perpetual social and economic subordination, as others more educated and with the financial means to keep up with advancing technology move further ahead. The internal digital divide tends to have a domestic north-south dimension, with the South being better serviced by high speed information networks.

5. The Finnish case provides a window on problems that other less developed IPAIT members might face in the future as they move towards an information society. For example, the country report notes that computer users form a large proportion of workers in the knowledge society. Much work is knowledge based and done on the computer or multi-media equipment, and so there arises problems of obesity, muscle aches, and cardiovascular ailments, which are all related to a sedentary working style. Moreover, mental health problems are also increasing due to continuous changes and uncertainty inherent in a fast changing technologically oriented society. "Sleeping problems, burnout, depression and anxiety have become epidemic," the report stated.

3.6 Kazakhstan

1. Kazakhstan is a young state with high levels of economic growth in recent years, which means resources are available for what Kazakhstan calls the "transition to post-industrial service and technologically oriented economy. The development

priorities as contained in the Industrial – Innovation Strategy for 2003-2015 are to use science-based innovations to diversify the economy, moving away from a narrow raw-materials based economy.

2. The emphasis on using practical science has resulted in the adoption of a system of tax privileges to spur development of high technology industries. A national geo-stationary satellite programme is conceived as part of a planned national satellite system for broadcasting. Technology parks such as the "Informational Technology Park" in the suburb of Almaty have been set up.

3. A government programme for the development of a national information infrastructure was adopted in March 2001, and two laws provide the framework in which e-Government efforts are to proceed:
    - Electronic Document and Electric Digital Signatures law
    - Information Processes and Protection of Information law.

4. All state agencies at the management level are supported by computer technologies, with local networks established for intra-organizational work.

5. Kazakhstan has undertaken a wide-ranging methodical programme of expanding electronic applications to the administrative and legislative branches of government. A web portal for government offices exists along with websites for various government departments.

6. For developments in e-Parliament, the following are key features:
    - An electronic system of voting is used for the internal election of legislators;
    - A parliament website, www.parliament.kazakhstan, created in 2001, enables citizens to be informed about the activities in the legislature. The design of the site follows recommendations made by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The website will also extend to an interactive mode in the near future;

- MPs have use of the Internet and local area network in their law-making activities;
- A comprehensive database exists for parliament information. An Intranet system is also planned to refine search capabilities.

7. For Kazakhstan, ICT is not seen as merely a collection of hardware tools to promote efficiency, but as a qualitative new way of providing state services to the people. This means co-ordination and consultation with all societal elements, the ultimate aim being the "efficient satisfaction of requirements of the society."

3.7 Kenya

1. Kenya's ICT infrastructure is relatively well developed by African standards. The key facts on the country's ICT situation are:
    - less than 1% of the population of 33 million has computer access
    - 54% of the population are at the poverty level
    - 60% of the population is literate
    - 40 languages are spoken
    - 40 Internet service providers (ISPs) are in operation.

2. Kenya's policy is to use the market mechanism to promote wider use of ICT, and to rely on the private sector to produce ICT products and services. Over the past eight years, it has lowered taxes on ICT products from 200% to 5%. Major opposition parties are pushing for removal of all taxes on ICT products and services. The telecommunications service sector has been opened up to private operators. The national telephone company, Telecom (K) Ltd., provides VSAT, ISDN, Digital Finance Relay, and digital packet services. A national debate is underway to partially privatize this company, and to allow a second network operator to be set up.

3. The government has pledged to introduce personal computers (PCs) in large numbers in every secondary school, plus a telecentre and community radio station in every district. It plans also to achieve in five years a target that at

least 25% of all government interaction and services be delivered electronically through computers and the telecommunication network.

4. An Electric Governance Division and a Centre for e-Governance is being established by the Ministry of Information Technology. The former aims at identifying strategies to improve governmental service delivery to citizens via ICT. The latter aims to showcase existing tools in e-Governance and acts as a forum to encourage interaction among government officials, legislators, private sector, businesses, and other stakeholders. Identification of common concerns and priorities is a key function of the Centre.

5. Upgrading parliament's ICT capacity is an ongoing process, with an IT training programme for members of (MPs), who now have PCs installed in their offices. Currently, 105 of the 220 legislators have private access to the internet, and all legislators will have such access in the near future. A parliamentary website, live coverage of parliamentary proceedings, and electronic voting in the parliamentary chamber are being planned.

6. Kenya is a member of the Regional New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) programme, in which ICT promotion activities form a component.

7. Thus, the Kenyan approach to ICT development is one of government initiatives with involvement by all the key stakeholders in a market-based setting with the state's role being indicative and indirect.

8. A striking comment in the report explains the African continent's ICT predicament: well:

> "...Africa is perhaps the world's continent where information and communication technologies are least developed and used. Yet this continent needs ICT the most since traditional modes of communication are either non-existent, unreliable, or outright unaffordable."

3.8 Korea

1. Reflecting the country's relatively advanced state of the ICT capabilities, many Korean political processes have been subject to ICT applications. The report states:

   "Thanks to the technologies, politics has become more accessible to commoners. They can take part in public policy making processes using digital communication devices, communicate directly with the government and politicians through the Internet, and participate in open discussions at forums provided by the electronic media."

   Also, Korean politicians are pro-active in using ICTs for interacting with citizens:

   "A significant number of politicians are encouraging citizens to actively participate in political debates in cyber space."

2. Thus, in the 16th presidential election, the Millennium Democratic Party selected its presidential candidates through online primaries where ordinary citizens were invited to participate and cast ballots.

3. An online People's Participation Centre was established by the government, and it received candidates for ministerial position and collected policy ideas from the electorate.

4. In the work of parliament, the idea of e-Parliament is well established, with all information essential to public participation available online through the Legislative Knowledge Management System. From this, citizens can have access to:

   - current laws, records, foreign legislation
   - budget and accounts information
   - status of Assembly bills, motions, resolutions
   - database of minutes and background documents
   - Internet broadcasts of major hearings and parliamentary meetings.

5. An electronic voting system for the National Assembly plenary meetings is in place. Parliament has also established an online Civil Service Centre to facilitate citizen feedback or what the report calls 'direct opinion sharing with the citizens". The Centre's services are also in English, to service overseas Koreans and foreigners residing in Korea.

6. Korea sees ICT as a locomotive to achieve democracy and economic development and aims to methodically utilize the best and latest ICTs in all areas of e-Government and e-Parliament. It has faith in the ability of ICTs to deliver. The report states:

   "Information and communication technology can usher in the kind of future that we all desire."

3.9 Poland

1. E-Parliament in Poland is relatively advanced. The legislative process, i.e., the making of laws, the work of the Members of Parliament and parliamentary commissions, are all supported by computers. Electronic information on the work of parliament, its role and tasks, the democratization process and laws of the land is provided to citizens. And the Parliamentary Secretariat is also serviced by computer systems.

2. All occurrences connected with the legislative process are registered electronically and promptly made publicly available through the Internet, and this includes live transmission of parliamentary sessions. Voting within parliament is automated.

3. The software used in the legislative process is based on RDBMS Oracle, Lotus Notes / Domino systems, and full-text Verity Search System.

4. An Internet Legal Information System is in place, and is continually updated for amendments and other changes. It contains a description of all legal acts passed since 1918.

5. MPs have their own web pages and e-mail addresses. They are informed electronically of all new printed matter related to parliamentary work, paper versions of most documents having been eliminated, except on demand.

6. An internal parliamentary electronic voting system is in place, as well as an MP ID card system used for voting, accessing gates and other areas of parliament. The Polish Parliament also provides audio and video transmission of its sessions, via the Real Audio / Video System and can handle simultaneous access by l000 Internet users.

7. European Union documents collected by the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union can be accessed through the UEZ Mail system. Knowledge concerning law making and legal acts in foreign countries is seen as important by Polish parliamentarians, in the effort to advance e-Parliament in Poland.

3.10 Romania

1. Romania recently joined NATO and is now a candidate for admission to the European Union in 2007. Thus, Romania is harmonizing its ICT infrastructure and laws to meet the European Union's specifications.

2. The growth rate of the ICT industry in Romania has been high and human resources capability in this field developed, with many Romanians being hired to work in the Silicon Valley in California. On the other hand, Romania also has "skilled hackers of world-class standard," and this is one reason why the Romanian Parliament has adopted strict IT legislation to prevent and combat cyber crimes.

3. A detailed framework of laws covering ICT activities has been established in the past three years, and the Parliament has created an ICT committee for this purpose. Some relevant laws are:
    - An Electronic Signature Law which enabled the firm "E Sign Romania" to be set up offering secure site services. Romanian certificates are now

validated in EU courts and vice versa, according to an EU-Rumania agreement on electronic signatures;

- A law on Electronic Commerce, which in its design adheres to the European Directive;
- A law on the Processing of Personal Data and Protection of Privacy in the Telecommunication Sector;
- A law on preventing and fighting cyber crimes. Also, in this aspect, the ICT Ministry created a website called www.efrauda.ro, which is a focal point for Romanian efforts to fight fraud committed on the Internet. The American FBI works closely with Romania on cyber crimes and has opened an office in Bucharest;
- An e-Procurement law dated January 2002;
- An electronic cashing law for administering local taxes and duties.

4. Thus, Romania with a rapidly growing ICT sector has developed a strong legal framework to manage such growth in an orderly manner. Its commitment to join the European Union in 2007 is an added incentive to orient its legal framework and ICT industry to EU standards, in order to fully participate in the huge European ICT products and services market.

5. Growth of the ICT industry in Romania has been termed “spectacular,” as can be seen by the following figures:
    - The value of the communications market in 2003 is 3,639 million Euros, up 60% from the year 2000;
    - There are 7 million mobile phone subscribers in 2004, up from 2 million in the year 2000;
    - Production of personal computers is now 50,000 units yearly, and many manufacturers have been awarded the ISO 9001 Certificate;
    - Production of computers, data transmission, telecommunication equipment, and software is thriving;
    - The software industry comprises some 4,800 firms. Its high standard is indicated by the purchase by Microsoft of RAV, a Rumanian anti-virus system, developed by Ge-Cad, a Romanian Company.

3.11 Thailand

1. For Thailand, the vision of the political leadership is to transform the country into a knowledge society, and to harness ICT to uplift the standard of living of the people. A strong political will exists, and momentum is provided by the prime minister who, before taking political office, was a highly successful telecommunications business leader.

2. Thailand is determined to move forward on a broad front, and has formulated strategies to cover e-Parliament, e-Government, e-Commerce, e-Industry, e-Society and e-Education -- all aimed at propelling the nation to a situation where it can compete in a global world economy that is becoming increasingly knowledge-based.

3. Thailand's ICT development follows two ICT Master Plans covering the years 2001-2003 and 2004-2006, which state that Thailand's vision is to:
    - Use ICT to achieve sustainable development;
    - Change Thailand into a knowledge-based society;
    - Apply ICT in areas which would increase the country's competitiveness;
    - Develop the ICT industry and encourage its utilization by the public and private sectors.

4. The logic for conceiving plans to develop the other e-areas mentioned above is that e-Parliament development is seen as only one part of an overall socio, economic and education transformation that is needed to equip Thailand to survive and prosper in the twenty-first century.

5. Thai e-Parliamentary development has followed two stages. The first laid the foundations for e-Parliament, and included the formation of two websites for both the Senate (www.senate.go.th) and the Parliament (www.parliament.go.th). These websites have now evolved from mere provision of information to a degree of interaction. The second, current phase, is aimed at improvement in overall efficiency and standards. This means

standardizing ICT systems management to achieve the ISO-09002 Standard, attaining better quality of data, strengthening information centres, including developing the skills of ICT staff in parliament.

6. At present, the Parliament is well equipped with computer hardware and software. Intranet and Internet are serving on a high speed bandwidth of up to 155 megabits/second, and there are 800 outlet ports throughout the parliamentary buildings. Application systems are available for use in legislative deliberations and process, in meetings management, and in searching laws and regulations, to give examples. Back office applications are also used for a variety of functions including procurement, payroll systems management, and managing registries of Members of Parliament.

7. The ultimate aim of the Thai e-Parliament effort is to achieve e-Democracy, where citizens are using ICT to some extent in their political activities, such as in e-Voting, e-Hearings, e-Interaction and e-Campaigning.

8. Thailand's e-Government programme is the lead umbrella programme covering the other e-initiatives. E-Government's objective is to provide public services to citizens more quickly and efficiently, as well as performing other traditional functions of government, such as tax collection, electronically. Successful pilot projects include e-Revenue, e-Investment, e-Statistics, e-Commercial Registration, and e-Parliament. Because integration of these e-Services is needed, a common infrastructure has been developed such as GDX (Government Data Exchange), GNX (Government News Exchange), One-Stop Services, Government Intranet, and Government Authentication.

9. In e-Industry, ICT is increasingly being introduced in manufacturing and services, mostly in back office administration; logistics and marketing; plant management; and process control and measurement. Increased ICT utilization has been due to the change in the economic structure from agriculture-based to one which is more manufacture-based. Firms large and small have turned to ICT in order to increase their competitiveness.

10. The government's objective, as contained in its ICT Plan, is that by 2010, Thai industry will become knowledge-based, with linkages between production and management networks to be well developed. The government will promote the production and use of ICT products, with emphasis on those that contribute to making Thai producers more competitive in the global markets.

11. In Thailand, most e-Commerce is in Business to Business (or B2B), whereas Business to Consumers (or B2C) is not faring too well because it faces problems such as low trust and low confidence in the concept on the part of consumers. The problem also lies in the lack a comprehensive law governing e-Commerce.

12. The ICT Master Plan aims to develop specific e-Transaction laws, put in place secure e-Payment channels, expand e-Procurement, and build up human resources skilled in such activities. The government is expanding its role in e-Commerce to provide a catalyst. It is an e-Payment system service provider. It also encourages SMEs, seen as an engine of grassroots income and employment growth, to use ICTs. And it has established pilot projects in the electronic and automotive industries.

13. Thailand places much importance on e-Education, as a key driver to transform the country to a knowledge based society. Many projects are being implemented at present, several at the village level, to improve ICT awareness and interest at the grass-roots level. A "One District, One Ideal School" project aims to create an outstanding school per district nationwide in which ICT plays an important role in teaching and learning, so as to be a model for other schools in the area. A similar project, the "One District, One School Lab," has Microsoft participating by providing low-price software and training in a selected school per district, with the aim of developing IT skills among students and teachers, and that school in turn would then be a beacon for other schools.

Other projects include:

- Creation of educational TV programmes for distance learning programmes, to be delivered by satellite. Currently, thirteen educational channels are available via local cable TV;
- A National Knowledge Institute is being established to encourage production of digital content by various stakeholders, and e-Libraries are planned, to encourage life long learning. The goal is to improve the reading and learning culture of the Thais;
- A SchoolNet project has been implemented since 1995 to provide Internet access for almost 5,000 schools by dialing one number. Users can access many learning activities and teaching materials. A low-price computer project has been initiated since 2001 to enable poorer citizens to utilize ICT.

14. Future plans are to:
    - improve on communication bandwidth
    - improve content creation
    - develop a national digital library and knowledge institutes
    - expand academic instruction using ICT.

15. E-society in Thailand means improving the quality of life of the people via ICT, and working to bridge the digital divide. Key projects are: low-price computer; cheap one-baht per hour Internet access; a Linux promotion project, which offers free operating system software; an "ICT City Project," which will transform selected cities to be regional ICT development centres, each responsible for creating a multiplier effect in e-Development.

16. The vision for e-Society development is to construct for every community--especially rural communities--a basic ICT infrastructure, focusing on low-price computers, improved communication bandwidth, and content creation capacity building.

17. For ICT laws, an Electronic Transaction law, covering electronic signatures, has been in force since 2002. Also, Section 78 of the Thai Constitution specifically

requires that an information infrastructure providing equal access by all people be established, and a draft Bill to this effect is being considered by Parliament. Similarly, a Data Protection law, a Computer Crime Bill, and an Electronic Funds Transfer law, are in various stages of consideration by the Cabinet and Parliament.

18. Thailand aims, by these laws, to develop security and trust in electronic handling of data and dealings, to assure the public that they are being protected from electronic intrusion into their private lives while participating in various e-programmes, and to assure businesses that it is secure to engage in e-Commerce.

IV. Panel Discussions

Introduction

1. During the conference, four panel discussion groups were held, all at the same time on the afternoon of 18 May 2004. The discussion groups were aimed at soliciting ideas, experiences, problems, and solutions. The focus was on six themes: e-Parliament; e-Government; e-Commerce and e-Industry (discussed together); e-Society and e-Education (also discussed together). In the panels, some country papers elaborating on the themes were presented.

2. In the appendix section of this report are given: the briefing summary of the four panel discussions, the papers presented, and the names of delegations who attended. The following is a more detailed version of those summaries:

E-Parliament

In the e-Parliament group, experiences with respect to e-Parliament development were shared by Thailand, Jordan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Venezuela, Angola and Finland. The key concerns and recommendations are presented here:

1. Most discussants agreed that members of parliaments should receive proper training in computers and Internet usage, in order for e-Parliament to function well. However, for older MPs there may be some resistance and more preference for traditional communication and information handling done on paper. In Finland, the current practice is to have two sets of documents, paper and electronic, for MPs to use, although this does raise costs. But it is a practical, stop gap measure until such time that e-documents and e-communications are accepted by all MPs.

2. Most also accepted the idea that IPAIT members should produce their parliamentary websites in both English and their national languages.

3. On country experiences, it was noted that progress on e-Parliament varies according to the countries' level of development. But all expressed similar goals for e-Parliament: personal computers with Internet access for all MPs; parliamentary bi-lingual websites with real-time transmission of sessions; electronic interaction facility for citizens; upgrading to fiber optics; updated legislative documents online for MPs and the public; and international sharing of technologies and best practices.

4. On real time online transmission of parliamentary sessions, it was clarified that in Korea, this is done through the parliamentary website; and there is an interactive component in that after such transmissions interested citizens can follow up with questions to parliamentary staff on bills or topics discussed. They can also contact their MPs directly via e-mail.

5. It was suggested that more consideration should be given to the question of how to expand MPs interaction with voters and constituents, so as to broaden the practice of e-Parliament from the current emphasis on in-House improvements, to a more political dimension and with broader national coverage. Internet chat meetings between politicians and voters prior to elections were an example cited. The Finnish delegate noted his election campaigning was conducted largely through the Internet and his campaigning costs were the cheapest of all the MPs who were elected, amounting to only five percent of the most expensive campaigning expenses where much was spent on newspaper and television advertising.

6. The reliance on the Internet for campaigning also, in effect, promotes more democratic politics, as potential MPs now know they do not need large sums of money to run a successful election campaign.

7. Another point for parliamentarians to consider is that once the system of continuous contact between MPs and constituents is established technically, a flood of e-mails from the latter is to be expected--the Finnish delegate referred to hundreds at any one time in his experience—and the unfortunate fact is that only

a small number can be responded to properly even with the help of an assistant; the rest remains unanswered due to the pressure of other duties, causing aggravation among constituents. The problem is likely to become greater as an information society culture develops with citizens using more e-mails and expecting quality responses from MPs.

8. In the future, it could be foreseen that these citizen expectations, plus the fact that MPs will be traveling more and more, and the availability of hi-tech portable communication equipment, will pressure MPs to maintain constant communications with their parliaments and their constituents while they are "on the road." The Finnish delegate mentioned his experience in using his mobile phone and PDA (personal digital assistant) to keep track of events and schedule meetings at his home base as well as to update his personal web pages frequently, sometimes even daily, in order to meet the expectations of his constituents who demand continuous attention from their elected MPs. This is an added workload in the e-Parliament era.

9. On parliamentary websites, once it is up and running, a huge amount of continuing work will be needed to update the web pages and fill it with relevant content, to make it attractive to use. And since such web sites are also aimed at interaction, there is the added work of assuring that feedback is given to electronic inquiries and requests.

10. On privacy issues, having personal information stored electronically, whether it is for purposes of state administration or for provision of services to citizens, runs the risk of invasion of privacy and abuse of personal information. These could be done not just by domestic organizations but also by outside powers that have more advanced technologies. The problem is more serious for small countries which have contentious relations with big powers, and thus are vulnerable to the latter's superior electronic penetration capabilities

<u>On IPAIT Affairs</u>:

11. Much discussion centered on the need for each IPAIT member's website in English in addition to the national language(s), in order to increase the flow of communications and the sharing of experiences and ideas among IPAIT members. It was agreed by this Panel to propose strongly to the IPAIT General Assembly that members also produce an English version of their web sites.

12. The issue of translation software was discussed, whether such software could adequately translate English text into the national language. The Thai Director of NECTEC (National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre) explained that such software does exist and is used internationally but the degree of accuracy varies depending on the nature of the text. For bullets and phrases, accuracy is higher than full texts, the latter achieving only 60 percent accuracy at his time. Research and development is still needed to increase this percentage, especially in developing electronic dictionaries. He referred to the Thai website www.supasit.com which translates English language web sites into Thai automatically using appropriate software, so a site such as CNN.com can be read in Thai. But there is a need for IPAIT members to work together to add a translation component into their software to enable enable automatic translation from English to the national language, and vice versa.

13. It was proposed by the Saudi Arabian delegate that an IPAIT quarterly electronic newsletter be produced. It was suggested that such a newsletter should be the responsibility of the host countries of IPAIT meetings. This will facilitate the flow of communications and help stimulate activity during the period between general assemblies. Judging from the past, i.e., the period between the First General Assembly and the Second, there had not been much movement.

14. Related to the newsletter is the issue of content of the IPAIT website. The Thai delegate explained that the national chapter idea proposed by Thailand to the IPAIT II General Assembly is aimed at providing a mechanism or avenue for continuous work and follow-up on IPAIT intentions and decisions, so that there is not a long pause of activities between Assemblies. Each national chapter could then, among other duties, carry out the information exchange function

including feeding information into the website. Some topics suggested by the Thai delegate could include the structure of the member's parliaments, information on the MPs and their specializations, the various committees that have been set up, and the issues currently debated.

15. The size of the national chapter is subject to decision by each individual country, but assuming a figure of five, these MPs in the chapter would then have the task of managing the realization of what has been agreed on in the Bangkok Declaration and in the Joint Communiqués that are issued after Assemblies.

16. On Angola's request for Finland's assistance in building an information infrastructure, the Finnish delegate said that he will follow up on this on return to Finland, and noted that in the past Finland has supported similar projects. Also, the Finnish President has spoken of the need for developed countries to help less developed countries to build up an information infrastructure to lay the groundwork for a future information society.

17. Korea also referred to possible Korean assistance to IPAIT members in the future. Korean firms have provided assistance to Vietnam and Venezuela, the latter on e-Commerce, and Samsung was involved. The way to move forward on this is to get in touch with Korean firms to explore possibilities of assistance, and also to keep in touch with the Korean delegate.

E-Government

Four presentations, dealing with problems in e-Government in their countries were presented by the Thai, Chinese, Croatian, and Korean delegates. The main points raised in the papers and discussions that followed are:

1. A lack of basic infrastructure exists in many less developed countries (LDC), especially in rural areas. In places that do not have the basic utilities such as roads or electricity, ICT access is not possible, even if the technology exists in the country. Thus, investment to develop the basic infrastructure first is a necessary condition for expanding Internet access, although not sufficient.

Poverty and illiteracy which usually accompany inadequate infrastructure compounds the problem of rural digitization.

2. The quality of ICT service between the urban and rural areas is uneven. Telephone systems in rural areas are not adequate for efficient e-Government and Internet service. The need is for fiber optics and satellite services to bridge the gap, i.e. the domestic digital divide.

3. In the rural areas especially, people do not perceive the benefits and potential of ICT. This means even if the state provides the facilities, there is no motivation to use them. Thus, investment to improve their education will help solve this problem, or in the words of the Kenyan delegate, “there is a need to empower them to appreciate ICT.”

4.. In this regard, the Chinese approach was mentioned. This involved focus on distance learning via television, which is a popular medium even in remote areas. E-Learning might then be expanded there when the conditions are ripe.

5. A lack of sufficient knowledge of English, especially in the rural and poorer areas of LDCs is widespread. This hampers the growth of “e-Citizens.” Having bi-lingual keyboards and producing local language content can help solve the problem to some extent, but the problem still remains since English is still the premier language used in the internet, and to know English enables one to be more efficient in using the Internet.

6. Lack of an acceptable watertight solution to the problem of security of personal data and information stored electronically also exists This relates to the question of defining who, and in what context, has access to such data, since citizens must be assured that personal data collected will not be abused. In other words, there is the problem of proper way to store electronic archive, and appropriate use of private information. Participants tend to see this as a legal problem, to be solved by the passing of well-crafted laws.

7. It was pointed out that personal databases collected by the state are always under threat by abusers or hackers, such as by those who inject viruses into the system to undermine the state, and those who want to manipulate the data for their own personal gain (e.g., to use other people's identity). Parliaments should think about these "post-ICT-installation" issues and come up with legal solutions. The Internet can be both an opportunity for and danger to citizens' welfare, if not well controlled.

8. The quality of e-Government services needs to be improved. For example, parliamentary websites need to be updated, more interesting web pages produced, with more interactive features. The information infrastructure needs to be modernized, for example, by installing fiber optics.

9. The issue of operating system or platform language used for public services was discussed, and is seen as essentially a choice between Microsoft versus other alternatives, especially open source systems. There are pros and cons for each. The former is familiar to users and has strong support systems in place but is prone to viruses and will perhaps be more so in the future. The latter provides relief from reliance on a globally dominant system, but has problems of its own. Linux was also mentioned as an alternative, especially if the concern is with security. It was suggested that parliaments should come up with an operating systems policy based on the needs and context of each country. It was also noted that Chinese computer specialists have attempted to create a China-specific operating systems but the quality still could not compare with Microsoft, which has long market experience in terms of, for example, ease of use.

10. The cost of Internet usage is still high and beyond the reach of the poor even if the technical infrastructure is present.

11. E-Procurement is favorably seen as most promising in promoting transparency, cost savings, and alleviating corruption. But in developing countries, it is still limited to the central government level, and needs to be expanded to the village or local administrative level to become a truly national e-Procurement.

12. Parliaments need to maintain a watch over “electronic informatization”. The use of ICT is not a guarantee of high quality democracy; indeed it could work against it if e-Government is abused by the state itself to extend control over citizens. That is why there is so much debate in smart card vulnerability and personal information access issues.

E-Commerce and E-Industry

Two papers on E-Commerce and e-Industry in Thailand were presented, which can be viewed in the attachments.

1. On e-Commerce and possible applications in regional economic development, it was noted that ICT can be used in the regional groupings that have been formed in the last few years. The Greater Mekong Sub-region, which is a loose grouping of countries bordering on the Mekong River, comprising Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China, was cited as an example where ICT could be used more such as in handling customs clearance, or transit traffic.

2. An experience with process control in manufacturing in Thailand was presented, as an example of e-Industry. In Thailand, ICT is used in some manufacturing plants for online quality control, for example in food production. Machines would have a direct link via the Internet with the central management unit which could be based in another country, so that if something went wrong with the machine, the problem could be analyzed online by the central unit, thus assuring rapid fixing of the problem with minimum disruption time.

3. Laws on e-Business, in the case of Thailand, are limited by its applicability to domestic business applications, and cannot support international commerce. E-Commerce would be encouraged if parliaments enter into discussions to harmonize laws to cover e-Commerce between countries.

4. Because e-Commerce is a new form of business transaction for many countries, the Panel recommended that each national Parliament should set up a standing

committee or sub-committee to specifically oversee and guide the utilization of ICT (including of course e-Commerce). Such a committee or sub-committee would deal with topics in e-Commerce which are currently problematic – at least in Thailand – such as paperless trading, e-Logistics, e-Commerce application software, the question of CAs (Certificate Authority), and PKIs (public key infrastructure).

5. A lack of familiarity with and interest in using English is a problem in Thailand, and this is a structural obstacle to progress in e-Commerce and e-Industry, in which the majority of manuals and work documents are in English.

6. In Thailand, the private sector has agreed to promote use of e-Commerce in pilot projects in three industries judged suitable for e-Commerce treatment: automotive spare parts, textile and fashion, and tourism. In tourism, Thailand has arrangements with the ASEAN countries to promote regional tourism; and in this effort the use of "trustmark" in tourist-related web sites is planned, in coordination with the Thai NECTEC, which will give technical advice.

7. What is lacking very much in the Thai context is a lack in appropriate e-Commerce application software. There is not much use of digital signatures in Thailand--even though a law covering this is already in force---partly because the existing applications are incomplete with no facility on the forms for digital signature usage. Proper, standardized software acceptable by the trading parties would go a long way to stimulate e-Commerce.

8. Related to software issue, is the problem of public key infrastructure (PKI). In Thailand, an accepted PKI does not exist, and there are several competing vendor approaches and services. This results in many certificate authorities (CA) issuing several brands of digital certificates, both in the public and private sectors. The result is a drag on e-Commerce as traders who use a particular PKI cannot accept the digital certificate of a different PKI, and so he has to have several PKIs in place to cover other digital certificates. It is suggested that the government authorities work to harmonize and perhaps adopt one standardized

PKI system and to facilitate e-Commerce, both at the international and domestic level.

9. Another international e-Commerce problem in Thailand is the e-Payment system. The current payment software used does not cover all currencies. In this regard, the Thai Electronic Funds Transfer law which is under consideration should be enacted as soon as possible to deal with this and other issues, to promote confidence in payment systems.

E-Education and E-Society

1. Two papers on Thailand's experience were presented, one on e-Education, one on e-Society.

2. The Saudi experience was mentioned as an example of the difficulties, in terms of cost, in laying down a basic ICT infrastructure to cover countries with a very large geographical expanse. The required network investment is high, and so is the cost of distance learning programmes and other human resource development activities. Distance is thus a retarding factor. Also, ICT technology is changing rapidly and it is difficult to catch up. Investment in human resources thus has to be done on a sustained basis, so ICT personnel can keep up to date -- and this is costly. Hence, bridging the international digital divide is a recurring problem for LDCs.

3. Another problem relates to the problem of lack of knowledge of English. The result is that some countries find it hard to keep up with ICT developments due to the language barrier, on top of the fact of having to learn new difficult concepts. This further worsens the digital divide between those competent and those not competent in English.

4. A source of concern among IT specialists is that the more encouragement made to youth to learn English to be able to access the Internet, the more likely they are to lose their attachment to the national language. This is particularly a problem among Thailand's minority groups where children are taught English and

hence use it to play games and use the computers, resulting in a lack of interest in their community language and hence undermining the fragile minority cultures already under threat from modernizing influences.

5. How to reform Intellectual Property laws to support e-Education is an issue. Reform would help lessen the costs of e-Learning provisioning to the poor, since many new advances and texts in electronic edition are generally protected by such laws. Ways should be found to ease patent and copyright restrictions on such non-profit educational activities.

6. A point was raised as to why there are no participants in this panel from the developed countries, given the desirability of learning from their experiences and their technical prowess. It was suggested that their absence is due to the perception that they could not learn much from such a gathering. A solution might be to invite world-class authorities from the advanced countries to speak at future Assemblies, so IPAIT members can benefit from agreed upon topics.

7. It was agreed by the Panel to take up the issue of the lack of participation in IPAIT conferences by the advanced countries in the General Assembly.

V. DECISIONS MADE BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF IPAIT II

Amendments to the Charter

1. The Second General Assembly of IPAIT agreed to amend Article 3 (on composition of members) to read as follows**:**

> Membership of IPAIT shall be composed of parliamentarians from their respective National Parliaments. Each Parliament shall designate an official national chapter to bring more participation and continuity to the activities of IPAIT.

The original version read:

> Membership of IPAIT shall be composed of parliamentarians from their respective National Parliaments.

1.1 The reasoning is that the National Chapter would handle the Association's work in between General Assemblies, follow up on projects planned in the Bangkok Declaration, and agreements made in Joint Communiques. In addition, it would work on the IPAIT website, and exchange information and ideas on a continuing basis.

2. The General Assembly also agreed to amend Article 17 to read as follows:

> The official languages of IPAIT shall be English and the official language of the host country, and all documents shall be drawn up in the official languages. The official languages where deemed appropriate shall be used in the creation of web pages on the official website of each National Parliament. However in the event where the interpretation and meaning are different, the English interpretation and meaning shall be taken into consideration.

(The underlined parts are the additions agreed upon.)

2.1 The reasoning is that the parliamentary websites of IPAIT members should also be in English in order to enhance understanding and sharing of IPAIT members' parliamentary processes and related matters.

Adoption of the Bangkok Declaration

3. The Second General Assembly of IPAIT also adopted the Bangkok Declaration, drafted by the Drafting Committee and approved by the Steering Committee. The declaration contained projects designed further the stated goals of IPAIT. The following are the projects, which are meant to be collaborative, in the sense of not, at the present time, assigning which country will be responsible for which project:

1. Development of Regional and International Machine Translation Tools

The aim is to improve efficiency and accuracy of machine translation tools to facilitate lingual conversion in order to bridge language barriers among IPAIT members at the regional and the global level. The machine translation tools will support the important goal of familiarizing the various countries with one another's cultures and traditions. The tools, which facilitate translation from the official language of the host country to IPAIT official languages (Article 17), will contribute positively to the work of the parliaments of the respective members.

2. Establishment of Joint Efforts for the Reasonable Pricing of Software Products, and the Promotion of Open Source Software (OSS)

One of our objectives is to organize joint efforts by the governments to establish a strong rationale for the reasonable pricing of software products based on the idea of benefits to both software publishers and consumers. In this regard, the collective promotion of Open Source Software (OSS) is to be used as a mean to achieve the objective above.

3. Development of ICT Knowledge Portals

To develop an "ICT Knowledge Portal" in IPAIT official languages to exchange experiences and knowledge, especially in order to facilitate the passing of ICT laws. The Portal also includes sharing of information on the organizational structures and membership in national parliaments and the roles of parliamentary committees in considering and enacting new laws. At the same time, a joint effort is needed to support the formation of an Internet Gateway, and enhance IPAIT e-learning resources without any access fees. In addition, the IPAIT members agreed to develop collaborative programs to develop e-Learning systems, leading to courseware resources sharing, and the establishment of Cyber Universities.

4. Promotion of an IPAIT Human Resource Development Program.

The objective of this programme is to promote bilateral and multilateral co-operation among the IPAIT members and to also develop a common e-Learning platform for the education of personnel involved in forging ahead the various

e-initiatives, including the development of e-Parliament. In addition, it is as equally important to initiate an ICT professional development program in order to facilitate the exchange and sharing of knowledge and experiences among the members. It could be done specifically through training, consulting, and visiting programmes, all of which will help develop human resources in the IPAIT member countries.

Issuance of the Joint Communique

4. The Second General Assembly of IPAIT issued a Joint Communique which expressed IPAIT's goals and intentions. The full text can be seen in the appendix but the key sections are presented here:

III : Goals

1. The Bangkok Declaration stated the importance of collaborative projects comprising: (1) Research and Development of Regional and International Machine Translation Tools, (2) Establishment of Joint Efforts Aiming For Reasonable Pricing of Software Products and the Promotion of Open Source Software (OSS), (3) Development of an ICT Knowledge Portal and (4) Promotion of an IPAIT Human Resource Development Program.

2. To promote bilateral and multilateral co-operation in ICT-D among members of IPAIT.

3. To assure public awareness and participation in the development of ICT in parliaments, including to promote universal access to ICT and education, thus creating a level playing field for all.

4. To promote civil society willingness to adopt ICT in order to gain its support in the development of technology, tools and methods required to advance and make progress on all e-strategies discussed during the Second General Assembly of IPAIT.

5. To build up the capacities of developing countries on e-Commerce which will lower their reliances on imports, increase export capabilities, create opportunities at all levels, and provide them with a competitive edge in the world market in the present era of globalization.

6. To provide human resource development and encourage development of formal e-Learning programmes, including education programmes on ICT in order to narrow the education gap especially in rural communities.

IV : Plan of Action

7. Develop strategies and mechanisms to build cooperation among IPAIT members in all e-strategies discussed during the Second General Assembly of IPAIT.

8. Develop strategies and mechanisms to reduce the “Digital Divide”

9. Divide responsibilities to develop e-strategies among IPAIT members according to the Bangkok Declaration.

10. Privacy and security are crucial points that all IPAIT members should take into account, especially in developing electronic services via the internet. In this regard, member countries need to cooperate among themselves by sharing experiences on legislation in order to produce a data security and protection system that will meet the expectations of the citizens.

11. IPAIT members agreed to share experiences and to co-operate in legislative processes in order to bridge the digital divide, including ways and means to solve the problem of unequal allocation of information infrastructures.

APPENDIX

1. COUNTRY REPORTS

    1.1 Angola
    1.2 Brazil
    1.3 China
    1.4 Croatia
    1.5 Finland
    1.6 Kazakhstan
    1.7 Kenya
    1.8 Korea
    1.9 Poland
    1.10 Romania
    1.11 Thailand
    1.12 Sudan

2. PANEL DISCUSSION PAPERS

    2.1 Thai e-Parliament Summary
    2.2 Thai e-Government Summary
    2.3 Thai e-Society and e-Education Summary
    2.4 Thai e-Commerce and e-Industry Summary
    2.4 Korean e-Parliament Summary
    2.5 Romanian e-Parliament Summary

3. AMENDED IPAIT CHARTER

4. BANGKOK DECLARATION

5. JOINT COMMUNIQUE

6. PRESS RELEASE