



The Second General Assembly of the International Parliamentarians'
Association for Information Technology -IPAIT II

17-19 May 2004, Conrad Bangkok Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

E-GOV

IPAIT 2/2004/TRACK II/02

Panel Discussion on e-Government

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Distinguished delegates,

National competitiveness gained even more significance as the world economy became more interconnected. Against the backdrop, nations throughout the world are striving to realize e-Government, applying the latest technologies to the state administration.

There are many advantages to e-Government. E-Government reduces unnecessary redundancies by encouraging active information sharing, enhances work efficiency by utilizing information and communications technologies, better satisfies the needs of citizens using interactive media and mobile devices, and finally provides services transcending the barriers of time and space.

However, blind pursuit for e-Government for the sake of efficiency and convenience without sufficient research and social consensus on its possible side effects could inflict serious social damages.

Digitalization of administrative affairs and information sharing can enhance administrative efficiency but at the same time, can backfire and infringe upon privacy. In Korea, for example, plans to introduce electronic identification cards in 1997 and electronic insurance cards in 2001 were suspended due to mounting concerns over smart cards which many worried could lead to the violation of privacy and leakage of personal information.

Moreover, introducing the elements of direct democracy such as electronic voting system to gain insights into people's policy preferences could give rise to new types of isolation and inequality problems by disproportionately reflecting the interests of those who have access and means to utilize information. Therefore, efforts to advance direct democracy should be preceded by policies to bridge the digital divide between regions and social classes.

Informatization itself does not guarantee qualitative development of democracy. Depending on how we utilize it, we can either make our societies more democratic or merely tighten government control over citizens. In light of this, parliaments and parliamentarians need to keep a watchful eye on the informatization process and keep discussions on the issue going so that societies can better brace for possible side effects of e-Government. Thank you.
