



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

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

PRESS RELEASE ON IPAIT II GENERAL ASSEMBLY

During 17-19 May 2004, the Second General Assembly of the International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology (IPAIT II) was held at the Conrad Hotel in Bangkok. The Thai Parliament has been accorded the honour of hosting this important Assembly of the people's representatives. In 2002, the Inaugural Assembly (IPAIT I) was hosted by Korea. According to the IPAIT's Charter, the General Assembly is set to convene annually.

The International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology is an association of national parliaments that have elected to join. Currently, there are thirty five IPAIT members and nine more Parliaments have indicated in this Second General Assembly their intention to join. The purpose of IPAIT is to promote the exchange of ideas and information among members of Parliaments on the use of ICT in areas that will improve the performance of parliament in their various functions. The theme of this year's Assembly is "Enhancing Digital Opportunities for Parliamentarians and Citizens Through e-Parliament and Information and Communication Technology Development", which is very a timely topic, given the rapid global changes in ICT, and its ever expanding use in public affairs. The President of the Thai National Assembly, H.E. Uthai Pimchaichon, presided over the Opening Ceremony and the Thai Minister of Information and Communication Technology, H.E. Dr. Surapong Suebwonglee gave the opening speech. The Assembly had three days of fruitful meetings and four panel discussions on key sub-themes all with the aim of finding ways for parliaments to serve the people better by using ICT as a tool. These six sub-themes are: e-Parliament, e-Government, e-Society, e-Education, e-Commerce and e-Industry. The Assembly was attended by Parliamentary delegates, members of the Diplomatic Staff, International Organizations, and observers from academic and government institutions, a total of three hundred participants

Key results of the Assembly are contained in two documents which expresses the Associations' aspirations and plans, and also defines concrete Collaborative Projects in ICT which the Association has agreed to develop. The two documents, The Bangkok Declaration and The Joint Communiqué are detailed below:

The Bangkok Declaration on IPAIT Collaborative Projects

Realizing the significance of ICT in the development of the various aspects of society in the era of globalization;

Recognizing the need to adopt e-Parliament, e-Government, e-Education and e-Society, e-Commerce and e-Industry for the development of society;

Mindful of the need to strengthen collaboration among IPAIT members in the development of ICT infrastructure and for the improvement and the broadening of the ICT laws and ICT policies.

We, IPAIT members, have gathered here in Bangkok for the Second General Assembly of the International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology (IPAIT) to combine our diverse strengths to meet the challenges of the ICT development for our IPAIT members. In line with the theme of this Second Assembly, "*Enhancing Digital Opportunities for Parliamentarians and Citizens Through e-Parliament and Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT-D)*", the discussions have covered a wide range of issues leading to fruitful results and conclusions, especially on the collaboration stated above. Active participation from delegates at the Second General Assembly of IPAIT promised a strong partnership among members, which will definitely emerge and ultimately benefit the peoples of the members of IPAIT. Collaborative projects that have been unanimously proposed in the Assembly are as follows:

1. Development of Regional and International Machine Translation Tools

The aim is to develop 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.

Done at Bangkok in duplicate in English language on the nineteenth of May in two thousand and four

Joint Communiqué

The Second General Assembly

International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology (IPAIT II)

16 – 19 May, 2004

Bangkok, Thailand

I: Background

1. The Second General Assembly of the International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology (IPAIT II) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 16 – 19 May 2004. The General Assembly approved new member countries of IPAIT. Altogether 103 parliamentarians and members of the diplomatic corps participated in the General Assembly.

2. The main objective of the Second General Assembly is to discuss issues pertaining to the enhancement of digital opportunities for parliamentarians and citizens through e-Parliament and Information and Communication Technology Development (ICT-D).

3. The General Assembly recalled the recommendations adopted at the Inaugural Assembly of IPAIT in Seoul, Republic of Korea in 2002, which inter alia included the followings :-

- (a) The adoption of an Action Plan to bridge the digital divide among countries at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) phase I which was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 10-12 December 2003.
- (b) Calling upon the UN General Assembly to hold a discussion on the digital divide and urging the UN Secretary-General to establish a task force and guidelines in that regard.
- (c) Urging the World Bank, other international financial institutions and IT-rich countries to set up a special fund to assist developing countries in order to build information infrastructures, while accumulating human capital, and providing technological support.
- (d) Calling upon Governments to promote the use of open source software for e-Government, e-Commerce and e-Education so that peoples can access such software without financial barriers.

- (e) Urging Governments to provide incentives, such as tax and duties on telecommunications services, for private companies with a view to narrowing the digital divide.
- (f) Stressing the importance of realizing the proposal of IPAIT as appeared in the ANNEX of the Joint Communiqué of the Inaugural Assembly of IPAIT, namely Lingual Conversion Tools, Open Source Software, ICT Knowledge Portal, Internet Super-Gateways, IPAIT e-Learning Resources, and IPAIT Professional Development Program.
- (g) Stressing the importance of fighting against cyber crimes.

4. The General Assembly reviewed the status of cooperation among member countries in accordance to IPAIT Charter and noted that more efforts are needed to materialize the co-operation.

II : Framework of the Second General Assembly of IPAIT

5. Taking into account the importance of e-Parliament and ICT Development, the General Assembly agreed to promote collaboration among member countries of IPAIT in the dimensions of legislation, policies, and information infrastructures.

6. The General Assembly agreed to promote ICT-D in six e-Initiative areas, namely e-Parliament, e-Education, e-Society, e-Government, e-Commerce and e-Industry, with a view to develop an ICT industry, establish information accessibility, and promote ICT among citizens.

III : Goals

7. The Bangkok Declaration stated the importance of collaborative projects comprising (1) 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.

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

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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

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

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

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

16. 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.

17. 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.

V : IPAIT’s Charter Amendment

ARTICLE 3 (Composition)

The General Assembly agreed to amend the IPAIT Charter as follows:

18. Proposed Amendment

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

ARTICLE 17 (Official Languages)

19. Proposed Amendment

The official language 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 webpages of the official website of each national parliament. However in the event the interpretation and meaning are different, the English interpretation and meaning shall be taken into consideration.

VI : The Third General Assembly of IPAIT

20. The Third General Assembly of IPAIT shall be held in the Federative of Brazil in 2005. The date and venue of the General Assembly shall be announced by the host at an appropriate time.

21. The Second General Assembly of IPAIT recommends the setting up of a committee of IPAIT member countries to prepare for the Third General Assembly of IPAIT.

VII : Future General Assemblies of IPAIT

22. The Second General Assembly of IPAIT looked forward to future General Assemblies of IPAIT to continue the developments of e- parliament along the lines of IPAIT Charter and IPAIT Action Plans. In this regard, the General Assembly expressed its hope that Finland would consider hosting a future General Assembly of IPAIT.

Brazil has indicated its agreement in hosting the next General Assembly of IPAIT
