

Event : **Fourth Session of the Committee on ICT and Science Technology and Innovation**
Date : **August 30, 2022 (Tuesday)**
Speaker : **DICT Secretary Ivan John E. Uy**

OPENING STATEMENT

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Distinguished Ministers and Delegates I wish to greet everyone a pleasant day. Thank you for joining us today.

As Secretary of the Department of ICT of the Philippines, it is truly an honor for me to address you all on this momentous occasion. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, for the invitation.

At the DICT, we strive to be the enabler, innovator, achiever, and leader in pushing the country's development and transition towards a world-class digital economy. The Philippines, through the DICT, aims to fulfill its mission of Improved Public Access, Countryside Development, and ensuring sustainable growth of Philippine ICT-enabled industries resulting in creation of more jobs.

We are also in the process of deploying the Philippine ID system called the Philsys. PhilSys is a foundational identification system for all citizens and resident aliens of the Republic of the Philippines. The valid proof of identity provided by PhilSys enables simplified public and private transactions, eliminating the need to present other forms of identification during transactions.

This system shall also be a social and economic platform through which all transactions including public and private services could be availed of and serve as the link in the promotion of seamless social service delivery and strengthening of financial inclusion. It also aims to contribute in enhancing administrative governance, reducing corruption, and promoting ease of doing business.

We see that the scope and nature of the Digital Data pillar align with the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) Project and it is in our best interest to share and collaborate our experience and learnings in executing this project with our fellow member countries. We approach our important tasks by developing partnerships with other government agencies, industry associations, local government units, organizations, and individuals – especially in building innovation ecosystems for the countryside.

Our vision towards digital transformation for the Philippines will be fueled by innovative solutions coupled by strategically creating policies that advances digital services, safeguarding data privacy, and promoting interconnectedness and interoperability of information.

And everything starts with access or connectivity. On top of our agenda is improving the internet connection in the far-flung areas and the community's digital connectivity with the rest of the Philippines and the world - these are our top priorities at the DICT. Through our Free Wi-Fi for All Program and the National Broadband Program, we can ensure that more Filipinos in remote areas can have access to stable and cheap internet connection. And through the Common Tower Policy and the National Government Data Center Project, the public can also expect faster and more reliable internet connectivity. To elevate the living standards of the Filipinos, the DICT will also identify isolated communities and prioritize them for this program, with the goal to maximize the economic opportunities in the countryside.

With the entry of new players in the market such as Starlink, we expect the quality of our internet situation to improve increasingly because there will be more competition with the local service providers. This will in turn improve the quality of life of the Filipinos because they would widen their reach, experience faster internet speed, get affordable service, and take advantage of better opportunities.

The Philippines continuously improves its global positioning in the field of ICT. The DICT's Mindanao Cluster 1 was proclaimed Champion for three consecutive years at the World Summit on Information Society Prizes 2022, a global competition hosted by the International Telecommunications Union. For this year, the ITU recognized the Free Wi-Fi for All program in Western Mindanao created a cost-efficient network in the remote islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. We hope other countries may replicate this model in designing networks in areas with geographic constraints. Moving forward, we will deploy more Internet connectivity to what we call as "Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas.

As intercountry collaboration builds synergies and sharing of mutual benefits, the Philippines fully supports the draft Action Plan 2022-2026. We believe that this plan will serve as a useful anchor for our national initiatives, particularly on the development and updating of plans, frameworks and profiles of the ICT ecosystem.

We would also like to note with interest that under the agenda on space applications, the secretariat has collected several best practices that have evolved in the implementation of the Space Action Plan. With this, we are truly confident that the action plan will serve as

a blueprint for cooperative actions to which we anchor national efforts for universal digital connectivity, digital transformation, and a more inclusive digital society.

Finally, the Philippine government puts great emphasis on the need to convene regional policy dialogues at the highest level to drive digital transformation in the region.

As the ITU says - the creation of a dynamic ICT sector is a key component of international leadership in the global knowledge economy and advancing new technologies. Countries need to leverage opportunities to digitize key sectors to achieve social inclusion. We agree with that an ICT-centric ecosystem will be sustainable when everyone understands their role and collaborates with each other to create impact.

With that, we note and express appreciation to the Republic of Korea who in cooperation with the ESCAP secretariat will host and organize the First Asia Pacific Digital Ministerial Conference on 9-10 November 2022. We look forward to more collaborative initiatives between and among the country delegates here before us today.

I thank you all for the attention and wish us successful deliberations.