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## World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Meeting

On 13–15 December 2007, ITU hosted its 6th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (WTI) Meeting. Its main purpose was to review the state of ITU's statistics, define indicators, and discuss the collection, dissemination and use of data.

The meeting, which has been taking place regularly since 1996, was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT). It was attended by 171 participants from 78 countries and by a number of regional and international organizations. The meeting was chaired by Anchalaporn Siriwan from the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand. WTI meetings represent ITU's main forum in the area of telecommunication and information and communication technology statistics.

In his opening speech, BDT Director Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid highlighted the importance of the Union's work in measuring progress towards the information society. ITU is recognized as the main source of internationally comparable statistics in the area of telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICT). It also plays an important role in identifying appropriate indicators to measure the progress countries are making. This year's WTI meeting focused on the topics of com-

munity access, new and revised indicators and definitions, and the creation of a single ITU index.

### Community access indicators

The vast majority of households in developing countries still do not have access to ICT, such as computers and the Internet. Community access, therefore, plays an important role in connecting the unconnected. The recognition that traditional indicators (such as fixed telephone lines and mobile subscribers) alone are not sufficient to determine the extent of the digital divide has highlighted the need to measure community or public access to ICT. The meeting suggested a number of indicators to measure community access, including tracking the percentage of communities (in villages and towns) connected to the public telephone network (fixed and/or mobile), and those with a public Internet access centre.

This information will also help track the targets set by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), including its call to "ensure that more than half the world's inhabitants have access to ICT within their reach". The meeting encouraged developing countries especially to carry out surveys to find out how many people are making use of public access facilities.



Itum Shahid

*Gathering and analysing data is essential for measuring progress in narrowing the digital divide*

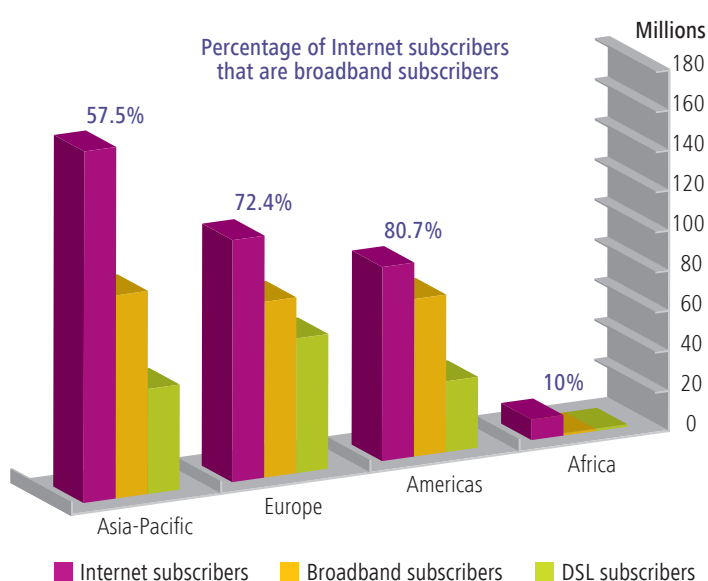
## Tracking the information society

As the United Nations specialized agency for telecommunications, ITU is responsible for producing statistics covering its sector. BDT collects and disseminates data on the markets for fixed, mobile and Internet services. Its data collection includes comparable statistics on tariffs, telecommunication revenues and investment, and traffic. These supply-side statistics come directly from ITU Member States, through the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators questionnaire. They are used to measure ICT developments across the world, analyse the digital divide, and identify market trends, for example in the area of broadband uptake (see Figure 1). Recently, ITU has begun also to cover demand-side statistics, including household and individual data collected through household surveys. These are particularly useful in tracking ICT usage. Household (and individual) data are collected through a questionnaire that is sent to National Statistical Offices (NSO).

The data collected by ITU cover around 100 indicators for more than 200 economies. ITU provides definitions to help guide countries in their data collection efforts and is preparing a household survey manual, which will be used for capacity building and as training material for NSOs in developing countries. As well as being used to analyse ICT developments, ITU data are published in a number of reports such as the *Yearbook of Statistics* and the *World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report*.

For more information on the BDT's Market, Information and Statistics Division, which is responsible for this work, see: [www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/)

Figure 1 — Internet subscribers by region and access type, 2006

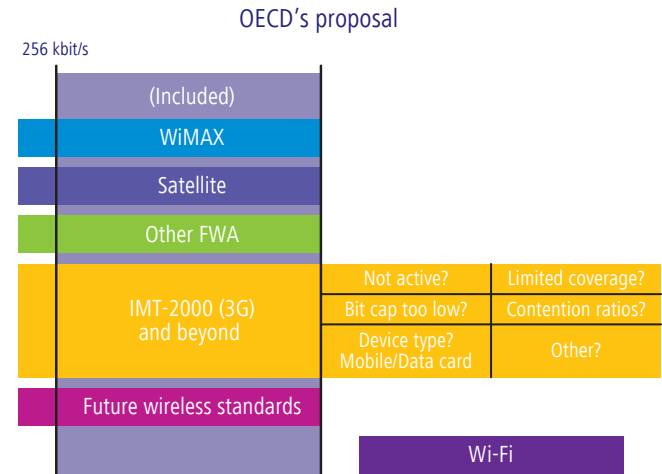


More information on the WTI meeting is available at [www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/wict07/index.html](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/wict07/index.html)



BT Openzone

Figure 2 — What should be included when measuring wireless broadband uptake?



### Mobile/wireless broadband

Given the rapidly changing nature of the telecommunication/ICT sector, there is a constant need to update and review existing indicators. As part of the meeting’s session on new indicators, developments in the area of mobile/wireless broadband were discussed. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is working on a harmonized definition to measure wireless broadband uptake, was invited to share its experience. OECD suggested that the technologies under this definition should include WiMAX, other fixed wireless access technologies and those that fall under the ITU’s IMT-2000 standard and beyond (see Figure 2).

A number of measurement issues were pointed out, including the distinction between potential and active mobile broadband subscribers. Even though mobile broadband access, particularly through third-generation (3G) networks, remains limited in many developing countries, it is important to start tracking this development at an early stage.

Current trends suggest that mobile broadband will be an important means of access in developing countries. ITU will continue to cooperate with the OECD to maximize international comparability of data.

### A single ITU index

ITU’s work in the area of statistics and international benchmarking has led to the development of two main benchmarking tools, or indices: the *ICT Opportunity Index* and the *Digital Opportunity Index*. The Plenipotentiary Conference held in Antalya, Turkey, in November 2006 called for the development of a single ITU index to measure countries’ progress towards becoming information societies. In this regard, the WTI meeting made a number of recommendations regarding a single ITU index, including on methodology and the choice of indicators. It was proposed that the technical and methodological aspects of the index should be finalized by a group of experts, including those from ITU Member States.