

**SIEM REAP DECLARATION ON ENHANCING UNIVERSAL ACCESS OF
ICT SERVICES IN ASEAN
“ICT REACHING OUT TO THE RURAL”, SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA,
24 AUGUST 2007**

The ASEAN Ministers responsible for Telecommunications and Information Technology, convening in Siem Reap Angkor, Cambodia on 23 - 25 August 2007, for the Seventh ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Ministers (TELMIN) Meeting;

EMBRACING the importance of regional efforts, commitments and cooperation in the realisation of the ASEAN ICT goal of building a connected, vibrant and secure ASEAN Community;

RECALLING the Vientiane Action Programme (VAP) 2004-2010 signed by the ASEAN Leaders on 29 November 2004 during the 10th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR, which focuses on promoting economic integration, growth and narrowing the development gap, through technology transfer, infrastructure development, capacity building, good governance, and trade and investment expansion;

RECOGNISING the importance of universal access to ICT services to all people in society particularly those living in rural communities and remote areas;

ACKNOWLEDGING that ICTs are essential for political, economic, social and cultural development and play an important role in poverty alleviation, job creation, and the prevention and mitigation of natural and other disasters

AFFIRMING that universal and affordable access to ICTs is key to social and economic prosperity and contributes to greater economic activities, higher productivity and ultimately general welfare;

NOTING the various Universal Service Obligation (USO) best practices and definitions by international organisations and other bodies, and also that proactive ICT policies and regulations could have positive impacts on the creation and development of the information society and that community access to ICT services is one of the most appropriate ways of achieving universal access for the rural communities and remote areas; and

COMMITTED to concerted cooperation and joint efforts between and among government ministries and agencies, international organisations, industry players and other relevant stakeholders toward accelerating the development of the ICT infrastructure, services, content and applications to bridge the digital divide and eventually to benefit the rural communities and the general economy within the ASEAN region.

DO HEREBY AGREE TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Strengthen/establish** the Universal Service Obligation Programme in each ASEAN Member Country, as appropriate, for enhancing universal access to ICT services so that the rural communities and remote areas in the ASEAN region will have equal access and connectivity at affordable cost;
2. **Ensure** a fair and healthy competition throughout the implementation of the USO Programme for greater benefits and safety net in rural communities and remote areas;
3. **Foster** a technology-neutral approach in network design, rollout of information infrastructure and services for rural communities and remote areas;
4. **Develop** relevant digital content and application for rural and remote areas;
5. **Facilitate** exchange of information, sharing best practices and further collaboration to create and maintain a fair and transparent regulatory framework to promote universal access while assuring the best quality and reliable services at the most affordable prices that meet the needs of rural communities;
6. **Encourage** relevant stakeholders to make contributions to their national USO Fund or similar arrangements, if any, taking into account differing levels of readiness and economic development;
7. **Develop** best-practices handbooks on the USO Programme as well as guiding principles for effective management, disbursement and monitoring of the USO Fund;

8. **Enable** new efficient business models for low income population and reserve appropriate resources such as radio frequency in order to work out affordable technology solutions for the rural areas;
9. **Foster** the Public Private Partnership arrangement in funding, development and implementation of the USO Programmes;
10. **Encourage** relevant stakeholders in the promotion, maintenance and creating awareness of the USO programmes and services, to enhance the sense of ownership and, to increase utilisation and to ensure security of the facilities in rural areas;
11. **Conduct** public consultations and appropriate policy studies on the USO programmes to ensure their relevance, cost-effectiveness and their long-term sustainability;
12. **Strengthen** human, institutional and organisational capacities through human resources and capacity building activities so that to facilitate a smooth and effective implementation of the USO programmes;
13. **Call upon** ASEAN Dialogue Partners, International Organisations and agencies and the private sector to continue to collaborate in planning, development and deployment of suitable and innovative technologies to address the USO programmes, including the sharing of knowledge and experiences, technology transfers, joint-pilot projects and human resources and capacity building activities; and
14. **Promote** the ASEAN USO cooperative platform for regional efforts in sharing of expertise and regulatory approaches to enhance universal access to ICT services in the ASEAN region.

ADOPTED at the Seventh ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Ministers Meeting (TELMIN) on 24 August 2007 in Siem Reap Angkor, Cambodia