

Enhance Cooperation, Promote Development and Push Forward the Building of a Global Information Society

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ABSTRACT

The people in remote areas in most countries and the disadvantaged groups remain inaccessible to basic telecommunication services. The digital divide is still widening instead of being narrowed down on the global scale. In an increasingly networked society, it is of great significance to bridge the digital divide and promote the development of the information society. Making greater efforts in development is a basic measure to bridge the digital divide. The Chinese government has been invariably giving top priorities to the development of telecommunication infrastructure in rural and remote areas. The constant development and innovation of ICT have greatly enhanced social productivity, dramatically lowered the price of communication products and services, satisfied the information and communication needs of low income groups, and injected new thinking and means into the international community to meet the challenge of digital divide. Interna-

tional cooperation plays an important role. Developed countries are duty-bound to offer assistance and support to developing countries in terms of finance, technology and human resources in their efforts to develop the infrastructure.

Key words: digital divide, information society, ICT

I. A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

World leaders gathered in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 to provide political backing for a road map aimed at developing and utilizing information and communication technologies (ICT) in the service of humanity. It is stated in the Declaration of Principles-Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium that "We are also fully aware that the benefits of the information technology revolution are today unevenly distributed between the developed and developing countries and within societies. We are fully committed to

turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalized." In an increasingly networked society, it is of great significance to bridge the digital divide and promote the development of the information society.

II. A KEY ELEMENT

Bridging digital divide is a key element in building the information society. In the present-day world, the ICT industry has become a major driving force for promoting the economic growth and social progress of all countries. While improving the living quality of the people, the ICT has also brought about profound changes to the means of production and the ways of living. However, we must be aware that amidst the rapid expansion of the information and communication network, the unbalanced development of ICTs remains acute between developing and developed countries and between regions at different levels of economic development. The people and the vulnerable groups in remote areas in most countries still do not have access to basic telecommunication services. The digital divide is still widening instead of being narrowed down on the global scale.

To build the information society, the global ICT industry must develop in a coordinated manner and the achievements brought about by the development of modern ICT should benefit every country and every citizen. To bridge the digital divide, we must put people first. Otherwise the information society is not all-inclusive.

III. BASIC MEASURE

Intensifying development efforts is the basic measure to bridge the digital divide. The all-round development of the society is the essential driving force behind the continuous growth of the ICTs. If the issue of development is not addressed, nothing can be discussed.

Since the reform and opening up, the Chinese government has been paying great attention to the issue of development. We have adopted effective measures to accelerate the construction of infrastructure including communication networks, creating essential conditions for the economic development; meanwhile, the sustained and rapid economic growth and the constant improvement of people's living standards bring up new and higher requirements for the development of ICTs. At present China has built up a national information and communication network covering the whole country and linking the whole world with advanced technologies and diversified services. The total number of mobile and fixed-line subscribers reached 750 million and the total number of Internet users amounted to 110 million, ranking No. 1 and No. 2 respectively in the world. The ICT industry has developed into the leading, pillar and fundamental industry in China's economy.

The Chinese government has been always giving top priority to the development of telecommunication infrastructure in rural and remote areas. The government aims at promoting the coordinated development between urban and rural areas and between different regions, and ensuring the equal access to the information and communication services by people in different regions and of different ethnic groups. In recent years, we have organized telecommunication operators to work on the "Cuncuntong Project", or providing telecommunications services for all villages. By the end of 2005, telephone access has reached 52,000 administrative villages, accounting for 97.1% of the total. The penetration rates of the telephone and the Internet are ever increasing and more and more people start to enjoy the convenience brought about by information and communication technologies, services and application.

IV. DISSEMINATION AND APPLICATION

We should pay attention to the dissemination and application of new technologies and services in

order to bridge the digital divide. The continuous development and innovation of information and communication technologies and services has provided us with unprecedented facilitation and convenience, greatly enhanced social productivities, dramatically lowered the price of communication products and services, satisfied the information and communication needs of low income groups, and injected new thinking and means into the international community to meet the challenge of digital divide.

The Chinese government prioritized the development of new technologies and services. We pointed out that the telecommunication operation sector should position itself in a greater context of the information service industry and gradually transform the development models. Proceeding from a technology-driven and market-oriented approach, the telecommunication operation industry should take practical measures to promote the development of NGN and 3G mobile communication, expand new business areas, cultivate new growth points, and promote the coordinated development of the economy and society through ICT application so that the ICTs can bring more benefits to the ordinary people.

V. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

It is necessary to strengthen international cooperation to bridge the digital divide, which is a common problem for the international community. We believe that developing nations should depend upon their own efforts and explore development paths suited for their own national conditions. Developed countries are duty-bound to provide assistance and support for developing countries in terms of finance, technology and human resources in their efforts to develop the infrastructure, to lead and encourage the private sector to participate in this process. International organizations should assume im-

portant roles and seek practical and feasible channels and means to promote common development through the consolidated cooperation among member states and the strengthened coordination with other international organizations. The Chinese government wishes to strengthen the equal, friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries and make due contributions to bridging the digital divide.

BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Jiang Yaoping was born in Wujin, Jiangsu province in September of 1952. He graduated in the Department of Foreign Languages of the Guangxi University for Nationalities in 1976. He received his Master Degree in Information Management from BI Norwegian School of Management in Dec. 1999, and Doctor's degree in Management Science and Engineering from Harbin Institute of Technology.

Mr. Jiang has been Vice Minister of the Ministry of Information Industry since April, 2004. He became



Director General of the Department of Policy, Laws and Regulations in July, 2002. He took the post of Director of the Computer Network and Security Management Of-

fice of the National Informatization Leading Group in May, 2000. Before that, he was successive holders of directors and deputy directors in the Guangxi Posts and Telecommunications Administration, and Nanning Telecommunications Bureau.