

**ICA 40<sup>th</sup> Conference  
Opening Session**

**FROM E-GOVERNMENT TO E-INCLUSION**

**Guido Bertucci, Director  
Division for Public Administration and Development Management  
UNITED NATIONS**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly pleased to be here today at this conference which will address the challenges of integrating government administration through information technology. The introduction of e-Government has made it possible not only to improve the internal workings of the public sector by reducing financial costs and transaction time and to better manage work flow and processes , but also to improve institutional linkages between different units, government agencies and ministries allowing for a better allocation of responsibilities and more effective delivery of public services. This meeting will further explore the potential of e-government for rationalizing the distribution of responsibilities and of information among agencies and for better connecting government with itself.

But I strongly believe that the full potential of information technology lies in the ability to enable people to share information and knowledge, to better participate in public decision making processes and thus have access to new opportunities.

Information technology and its use by government must strive to level the playing field among social groups within a society and thus foster economic and social development for all. Appropriate use of information technology can contribute to the growth potential of a society and to advancing the national development agenda of a country or a region and to the achievement of specific social and economic development goals but it can also exacerbate differences and inequalities. It is therefore important that we understand that the real benefits of e-government lie not necessarily on the use of technology per se, but in its application to achieve specific goals.

These goals should include:

- Provision of mechanisms for the creation of public value for citizens;
- Promotion of participation in democratic processes by using online channels, and placing politically useful information online; and
- Contribution to economic growth and sustainable development.

Today I would like to share with you the findings of our research on how countries of the world are utilizing information technology to improve their functioning and to better connect with their citizens.

A key product of our Department at the United Nations is the Global E-Government Readiness Report which ranks all 191 UN member states according to their e-government readiness. This is the only report of its kind that assesses the kind of services that governments provide to their citizens based on more than 50,000 features of e-government websites worldwide. The survey focuses on how willing and ready governments are to improve access and quality of basic economic and social services to their citizens, and involve them in public policy making through e-participation. It is a benchmarking tool for monitoring the progress of countries towards higher levels of e-government and e-participation service delivery.

Employing a statistical model for the measurement of digitised services, the UN e-Government Survey 2005 assesses the public sector e-government initiatives of Member States according to a weighted average composite index of e-readiness based on website assessment, telecommunication infrastructure and human resource endowment.

**SLIDE 2:**

The e-government readiness index is a composite index comprising the web measure index, the telecommunication infrastructure index and the human capital index.

**SLIDE 3:**

This is a graphic representation of the UN's e-government readiness index, which is composed of the web measure index, the telecommunications infrastructure index, and the human capital index.

**SLIDE 4:**

The telecommunication infrastructure index is a composite weighted average index of six primary indices based on basic infrastructural indicators that define a country's ICT infrastructure capacity, such as the PC index, the telephone index, mobile phone index, internet index, online index, and TV index.

**SLIDE 5:**

Human capital index is a composite of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, with two thirds weight given to adult literacy and one third to the gross enrolment ratio.

**SLIDE 6:**

This slide shows the results of the UN global survey results across regions. As you can see, South and Central America has actually increased their e-government readiness index from 2004 to 2005.

**SLIDE 7:**

This slide provides a ranking of the top 20 countries in the global e-readiness survey.

**SLIDE 8:**

Slide 8 shows e-government readiness in the Latin American region which puts Chile at the top of the chart, followed by Mexico.

The website assessments in the Survey are based on an ascending, five-stage model based of a government's online presence which include: i) emerging presence; ii) enhanced presence; iii) interactive presence; iv) transactional presence; and v)

networked presence. Countries are then scored on the basis of whether they provide specific products and social services.

Stage I is the *emerging presence which* represents limited and basic information provided online through a government web page and/or an official website; at Stage II, *enhanced presence*, the government provides greater public policy and governance sources of current and archived information, such as policies, laws and regulation, reports, newsletters, and downloadable databases; Stage III, the *Interactive presence*, is where online services of the government enter the interactive mode with services to enhance convenience of the consumer such as downloadable forms for tax payment, application for license renewal, etc. In addition, government officials can be contacted via email, fax, telephone and post.

At the *transactional presence* or Stage IV, the government's online presence allows a two-way interaction between the citizen and the government, including options for paying taxes, applying for ID cards, birth certificates/passports, license renewals and other similar interactions online.

SLIDE 9:

For example, this slide shows that countries at Stage IV or *Transactional Presence* are those with high income levels.

And lastly, Stage V, the *networked presence*, represents the most sophisticated level in online e-government initiatives. It can be characterized by an integration of government-to-government (G2G), government-to-citizen (G2C), and citizen-to-government (C2G) interactions. At this level of interaction, the government actively encourages participatory and deliberative decision-making through innovative online consultation mechanisms, soliciting citizens' views on public policy, law making, and democratic participatory decision making.

Appropriate use of ICT can play a crucial role in advancing regional and national development strategies and thus help to achieve specific social and economic development goals. It is therefore imperative that we understand that the real benefit to e-Government lies not in the *use* of technology per se, but in its *application*.

Building a participatory and inclusive society requires a multi-stakeholder approach to meet this objective. Several countries worldwide are exploring different ways of developing interactive mechanisms to encourage e-engagement and e-participation.

However, e-participation endeavours are still in their infancy and only a few countries have actively promoted it to date. In fact, it is not easy to assess the impact of e-consultations and e-participation because there are few examples of dramatic policy outcomes as a result of this process.

The UN Global e-Government Readiness Report also includes the first ever e-participation assessment of all countries. The e-Participation Index ranks all countries according to the quality and usefulness of information and services provided for the engagement of citizens in public policy making. This year we are further expanding the concept of the UN E-government readiness and the e-participation assessment.

Since e-government aims to make government more effective, transparent and accountable in the global knowledge economy, it naturally follows that in so doing, it will be better positioned to promote human development and ensure good governance. Therefore, the objective of e-government should be to transform itself to be more citizen-centered. In putting citizens first, governments are required to be more responsive to citizens' needs and inputs. In other words, the natural progression of effective e-government is towards e-consultation and e-participation in order to promote more citizen-centric services. In assessing the relationship between citizens and government, e-government initiatives fall into two categories: that of the citizen as a voter/stakeholder from whom the government derives its legitimacy; or as a customer who consumes public services.

We have divided E-participation or inclusive governance into three broad categories:

- i) information, i.e., a one-way flow of information from the government to the citizens;
- ii) consultation, i.e., a two-way relationship whereby citizens are encouraged to provide feedback to the government; and
- iii) active participation, i.e., a partnership arrangement with the government in which citizen engagement is actively solicited for defining and shaping policy. The last point can result in a truly empowered citizenry, allowing citizens the prerogative to influence policies and laws that govern their lives.

The UN's e-Participation Index assesses how relevant and useful the e-participation features of government websites are around the world and how well they are deployed by governments for promoting participatory decision-making. The index is a qualitative assessment of the quality, relevance and usefulness of government websites in providing online participatory tools to the people.

SLIDE 10:

Description of the e-Participation Index.

SLIDE 11:

This slide shows a ranking of the top 10 countries worldwide in the UN's e-participation index. Mexico ranks 8<sup>th</sup> among global leaders in e-participation.

SLIDE 12:

This slide shows a disaggregating of e-participation ranking in Central America.

In the Latin American region, the growth of e-government has been spearheaded by deregulation of the telecommunication industry. As a result, many countries of the region were able to expand access and invest in government e-services in recent years. Foremost among them are Chile, Mexico, and Brazil who have continued steadily to expand their e-government offerings online. However, digitising e-government is a complex and continuous process and no one initiative is the same as another. Reasons for that are many, including political commitment, level of development (both in terms of economic growth and human resources), and resource availability.

In some countries, government portals are integrated and multifaceted, while others may spin off separate portals from one national site. Mexico's triple combination of online services and transactions provide citizens with easy-to-use methods to interact

with government to address needs, comment on policy, and find pertinent information. It provides a multi-faceted approach to online services and transactions, and is an approach rich with potential for promoting access and inclusion for all groups of populations.

A look at Mexico's example explains how it aims to promote access and inclusion to its different population groups. First, **Tramitanet** is a one-stop shop citizen portal with services for both citizens and businesses. Second, **eMexico** is an extensive e-government site with online information and services categorized into ten "communities" where users click on the image that corresponds with their particular community. And last, **Foros** provides a networking presence for citizen discussion groups on national law and policy. Discussions and postings are divided by topics, as well as by specific legislation, and all registered citizens can post messages to be read by other citizens and the government.

Strategic and meaningful application of ICT for the purpose of improving the efficiency, transparency, accountability and accessibility of government is possible if the ultimate objective of e-government is to promote social inclusion, or e-inclusion. The real challenge lies in not only ensuring that certain preconditions are met for e-inclusion such as access to ICT tools, networks and literacy, but the degree to which e-inclusion enables an individual to participate more fully in the social, cultural and political arenas of society. Particularly in policy-making, e-participation makes use of the digital communications media to allow citizens to participate through a more inclusive, open, responsive and deliberative process. Where the relative difference between ICT penetration and its use among different socio-economic groups is high, it increases the digital divide between the "e-haves" and the "e-have-nots" in the world. Consequently, the focus of e-inclusion and e-participation should examine issues of empowerment rather than just access that will contribute to greater social cohesiveness, competition and democracy.

SLIDE 13:

Description of e-Inclusion

SLIDE 14:

This slide shows a model of e-inclusion. It is a *socially inclusive model* that actively promotes the participation of all citizens by taking particular account of the needs and priorities of minorities, geographically isolated groups and marginalized segments of society. This is a representation of how e-inclusion requires governments to ensure that equal access to information and participation is provided to all segments of the society, including women, minorities, the disabled, the elderly and the youth.

E-inclusion requires a shift in the focus from technology per se to its use to promote equal access to ICT-centered economic, social and cultural opportunities for people. It is a holistic approach to prevent widening of the access-divide and to avoid new forms of exclusion due to income, education, gender, language and content barriers. The round circle implies that each citizen should be provided the *same* opportunities for participation in the society and deriving the same benefits from ICTs .

A government focus on e-inclusion means that the leadership role of the government should be multi-dimensional and multi-centered. The government still needs to be a

facilitator of the right environment for the market economy; it still retains the managerial authority to oversee the regulatory framework; it still focuses on internal government networks to ensure transparency and efficiency; it still partners with the public sector for the diffusion of ICT infrastructures; and it still promotes participation of the citizen. But in addition it focuses on promoting access to the disadvantaged and marginalized groups; creating a level playing field for access to ICT tools; and supporting the use of ICT for socio-economic development.

The UN Global E-government Readiness Report 2005 confirms this assertion by supporting the notion of taking account of the nexus between technological advancements, the role of the government, and human development. It points to the need to align development thinking with the paradigm of the Socially *Inclusive Governance for the Information Society* which is a multi-pronged approach to promoting ICT-led real access, with a special focus on the benefits of technology to women and the disadvantaged in society.

As such, it is a call to all countries, particularly developing ones to focus on programmes and policies aimed at the diversification of the ICT base so that those with low income, women, disadvantaged groups and those living in rural areas are systematically included in the impending benefits from newer technologies. The Framework propounds the notion that to build an inclusive society, e-government should expand to e-inclusion.

SLIDE 15:

Includes a table of indicators of education and innovation in selected countries. As you can see, there is a high correlation between percentage of spending in education and the human development index.

SLIDE 16:

An important finding that comes across very clearly is that English is the dominant language of the web worldwide; as a result, large groups of people are potentially excluded from participating in the global information society.

SLIDE 17:

As a percentage of internet users, the participation of women varies greatly from one country to another. As you can see from this slide, it is interesting to note differences between countries like Zambia where 37.5% of women are using the internet, to that of Lithuania, where only 10% of women are internet users.

And finally, in an effort to further the understanding of e-government readiness and e-participation we have recently developed an interactive online tool. This online interactive tool will enable policy makers to assess their own e-government readiness, as well as undertake a comparative analysis of the state of e-government readiness of countries around the world. The Knowledgebase includes a web portal to allow policy makers, researchers and the academia easy access to view, sort and print information from the UN database on e-government readiness for 191 member countries.

SLIDE 18:

Is an overview of the recently launched UN's Knowledge Base or UNKB. It is a benchmarking tool that provides a comparative assessment for monitoring the progress of a country's e-government readiness from 2003 to 2005. As such it provides an interactive snapshot picture of a country's e-government readiness. The primary source of data for the Knowledge Base comes from the United Nations Global E-Readiness Reports and Survey.

SLIDE 19:

The next slide shows e-government readiness ranking by countries. This feature allows cross-country comparison of e-government readiness, as well as comparisons across the region and worldwide.

SLIDE 20:

This page of the UN Knowledge Base includes country data on the web measure index, the infrastructure index, the human capital index, and the e-participation index.

It is my hope that the UN Knowledge Base will facilitate the creation of a network of groups and individuals interested in e-government at the international level and serve as a stable, ongoing data repository and information system in support of the UN Global E-Government Readiness Reports and other related e-government initiatives.

We hope that the Knowledge Base will encourage the Member States to come up with new and innovative approaches for bridging the prevalent access-divide for the marginalized communities and in ensuring that new technologies become an effective tool in building an inclusive society for all. For your ease of reference, all of the above mentioned services and products that we offer can be found at the UNPAN portal at [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org).

Many countries are now exploring various ways of developing interactive mechanisms to encourage e-inclusion and e-participation. Trends in e-Government development in 2005 indicate that there is greater awareness among nations about the many benefits of participating in the information society.

The complexity of these endeavours make it all the more necessary to compile and highlight the lessons learned thus far from global experiences, and make a systematic effort in disseminating good practices that will be of immense value in driving the future growth of e-inclusion and e-participation. While advances in developed countries offer innovative and new thinking on integrating government and services, we need to be particularly aware of the fact that the digital divide between the developed and developing nations is real and growing. The development of ICT strategies, policies and investment choices will require much thinking on our part to bridge the gap between the e-haves and the e-have-nots. Only if we bridge this gap we connect the whole of government with the whole of its citizenry.

Thank you very much.