



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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**2020/TEL61/004**

Agenda Item: 3

**APEC Telecommunications and Information  
Working Group Initiative on Global Challenges and  
Cooperation Utilizing ICT - COVID-19 Pandemic and  
Beyond: Paper**

Purpose: Information  
Submitted by: TEL Chair



**61st Telecommunications and Information  
Working Group Meeting  
14-15 October 2020**

## **APEC TEL Initiative on Global Challenges and Cooperation Utilizing ICT**

### **- COVID-19 pandemic and beyond**

#### **Recognition of current situation**

The COVID-19 pandemic presents global challenges to the health sector and beyond. These challenges may bring social and economic crises that could fundamentally change our daily lives, ways of thinking as well as behavior and socio-economic activities. The current global challenge of COVID-19 pandemic requires holistic and streamlined approaches with evidence from information analytics as well as quick responses proportional to the speed and scope of its diffusion with social consensus and confidence. In our digitally and globally interconnected world, we can share relevant information and best practices responding challenges as well as challenges themselves almost at the same time. Digitalization can help address the current global challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic through the increased utilization of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the responsible application of emerging digital technologies, and continued cooperation while building confidence and resilience therein. As the crisis has been quick to challenge the physical ways we do things, from personal interactions to our businesses transactions, we recognize the need to adopt digital solutions. Furthermore, we acknowledged that this should be done in a way that supports interoperability.

#### **TEL activities and vision**

The APEC Telecommunications and Information Working Group (TEL) aims to advance the development of ICT infrastructure and services as well as to promote cooperation, information sharing and the development of effective ICT policies and regulations in the Asia-Pacific region. TEL also aims to enhance social and economic development through effective use of ICTs and ultimately develop the Asia Pacific Information Society (APIS), and contribute to the APEC's vision of building a dynamic and harmonious Asia Pacific Economic Community. APEC endorsed the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap (AIDER) and TEL agreed to the APEC Framework for Securing the Digital Economy (AFSDE), and TEL commits to contribute to their implementation in cooperation with other APEC fora and sub-fora.

#### **TEL Initiative and objective**

The following proposals outline possible areas for APEC member economies to propose initiatives and projects in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent global challenges through cooperation and utilization of ICT and emerging digital technology.

APEC TEL hereby proposes to:

- Share Information (and Best Practices)

- Recognize that Asia-Pacific and global cooperation through sharing of information and initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is essential in meeting the current COVID-19 pandemic, future global recovery, and global challenges beyond.
- Facilitate information (and best practice sharing<sup>1</sup>), on ICT policies and initiatives to address the COVID-19 pandemic, such as broadband availability, supporting ICT infrastructure, and ensuring a secure and trusted ICT environment
- Strengthen Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region and Outreach
  - Strengthen cooperation and holistic approaches with related APEC fora and sub-fora including the Health Working Group (HWG), the Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG), the Digital Economy Steering Group (DESG), and other relevant regional and international organizations.
  - Recognize the importance of setting and following the open and transparent procedures with social consensus through the public-private partnership and multi-stakeholder participation.
- Enhance Utilization of ICTs in Addressing Global Challenges
  - Support activities and efforts to address global challenges through the utilization of ICTs and emerging digital technologies, including through the promotion of smart working solutions, and ensuring interoperable, secure and trusted ICT environments regarding issues such as e-commerce, e-invoicing, e-payment.
  - Support and facilitate business as usual socio-economic activities currently facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with special attention to MSMEs for business activities (e.g., telecommuting, teleconferences, telemedicine, tele-education, etc.).
  - Cooperate to establish resilient infrastructure and systems while ensuring inclusiveness (accessibility and affordability) and interoperability, and to address the digital divide.
- Learn from COVID-19 and Plan for the Future
  - Recognize that the current global challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic enables us to better understand the vulnerable points of our economy and society, which could create a momentum to facilitate innovation and digital transformation as well as general preparedness for global challenges, including but not limited to disaster

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<sup>1</sup> Possibly by establishing a dedicated policy information sharing platform.

preparedness, if addressed timely and appropriately.

### **Implementation and Way Forward**

APEC TEL agrees to implement and further develop as appropriate, the above initiatives through its discussions and projects. Implementation of initiatives and/or projects under this proposal will be conducted via the steering groups, with this proposal as a standing agenda item alongside the existing agenda item for projects. TEL Members are encouraged to initiate APEC projects relevant to this proposal either through self-funding, APEC project funds including the APEC Digital Innovation Sub-Fund, or a combination of the aforementioned types of funding.

TEL also endeavors to share and review its implementation outcomes once a year possibly by the steering groups. Finally, five years from its adoption or by the end of 2025, TEL reviews comprehensive results of all the implementations and considers for any revision of the initiative.