

OECD-Workshop on ICT's and Environmental Challenges, Copenhagen,
22-23 May 2008

Opening speech by Marie Munk, Deputy Director-General, National IT
and Telecom Agency

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this Workshop on ICTs and the environment on behalf of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the National IT and Telecom Agency.

We are honoured to host this Workshop together with the OECD.

The subject matter and the venue are both very topical.

The title of the Workshop is "ICTs and Environmental Challenges".

It is a very saying title, which shows that ALL sectors of society must contribute in the fight against climate change and other environmental challenges.

And, as you know Copenhagen is going to host the UN Conference on Climate Change in December 2009.

I am certain that the OECD work on ICT's and the environment will contribute with constructive input to the UN Conference.

Of course, that Conference is not the only important meeting on the horizon.

I am confident that the ideas and discussions we will have over the next two days will linger and provide valuable input to other conferences and events.

We will bring our ideas to among others the OECD Seoul Ministerial on the Internet Economy and the Hokkaido G8 Meeting.

However, no introduction would be complete without mentioning the work of the OECD in this area. The 30 member states of the OECD and the organisation itself are working closely together in order to promote the agenda of ICTs and the environment.

Therefore, it is my hope - and a clear objective of this workshop – that we can contribute to the OECD Innovation Strategy.

Furthermore, I should like to think of this Workshop as a growth laboratory, in which new ideas can be promoted.

And, where expertise and experience can be exchanged between individuals, organisations and countries.

The ideas, the visions and the solutions that we gather here will also play a vital part in the proposed OECD Conference on ICTs and the environment in 2009.

That particular Conference promises to be a most interesting and important event.

Denmark will contribute enthusiastically in every way to the successful planning and execution of the Conference in 2009.

But, enough about the future prospects!

Let me say a few words about why we are here.

Recently, the role of ICTs and the environment has received a lot of attention.

Just last week, the European Commission published a communication on how ICTs can contribute in the struggle against climate change.

Viviane Reding - the Commissioner for Information Society and Media – has stated that we need a high growth, low carbon economy in order to meet Europe's energy efficiency goals by 2020.

She stressed that research and rapid take-up of innovative energy efficient ICT solutions will be crucial to lowering emissions across the whole economy.

And, last month, Mr Helge Sander - the Minister for Science, Technology - published an Action Plan for Green IT in Denmark.

The Action Plan consists of eight initiatives that will all contribute to the promotion of Green IT.

Both by reducing the environmentally harmful effects of ICT's and by promoting innovative solutions!

I know that a number of countries are working on similar initiatives.

So progress is being made at both national and international level to promote Green IT.

To me, personally, the discussion about ICTs and the environment is a very fascinating discussion.

It shows me just how much has happened to the way we think about ICTs.

Before, ICTs used to be a technical issue, dealt with only by technical experts.

And, the task of ICTs used to be limited to technical issues.

In short, ICTs were a means to promote effectiveness and efficiency. Nothing else.

These days however, we deal with ICTs in a very different way.

We know from our everyday lives that ICTs are more than just a grey and dull practicality.

No, ICTs are now an integral part of our lives.

We use ICTs when we want to buy an airline ticket, when we want to read the latest news and when we want to keep in touch with friends and family abroad.

In fact we use ICTs all the time.

And why?

Because ICTs give us tremendous value in our work and in our everyday and social lives.

Not to mention the fact that ICTs contribute to growth in our national economies.

The side effect is that we use a lot more resources on ICTs.

The production of our latest gadget requires metals, plastic, water and energy.

Our use of computers also requires plenty of electricity.

And the disposal of our obsolete equipment requires energy resources and staunch efforts to deal with the electronic waste in an environmentally-friendly manner.

This is the negative aspect of the increased use of ICTs.

But there is no reason to roll back the ICT revolution.

Because the good news is, that our everyday use of ICTs has allowed us to use these technologies as a tool to overcome all manner of challenges.

When our children are having problems in school, we look to e-learning applications to help us help them.

When there are traffic jams in our cities, we look to ICTs to help us find a solution.

And indeed, when the wealth of the world is threatened by environmental enigmas and climate change, we look to ICTs.

Even though ICTs are a part of the problem, they are an increasingly important part of the solution to the global climate challenge.

Green ICT can help reduce energy consumption and CO2 emissions.

The examples are many and diverse.

Every time an employee works from home using ICT, it saves on transportation and CO2 emissions.

Every time a business trip is substituted by a virtual meeting, we save CO2.

Every time an e-mail is sent instead of a letter, we save CO2.

And every time intelligent ICT solutions turn off the lights, heating or air condition, we save energy and CO2.

Yes, the potential for innovative solutions that can help the environment is most certainly there.

I am sure that the presentations and discussions that we will all experience over the next few days will be a step to realizing that potential.

In fact, I am very eager to open the discussions, which I am sure will be fruitful, constructive and eye-opening.

That is the reason why I am so thrilled to welcome you all to this Workshop in Copenhagen.

We get do discuss ICT from a completely different angle than we used to: ICT as part of the battle for a better environment.

Thank you for your kind attention.