

Outcome of TELMIN3

A. Electronic Commerce Initiatives

1. It was agreed by Ministers to push forward a pro-active agenda on electronic-commerce (e-commerce). A reference Framework for Action was accepted by the Ministers which included the following provisions to,
 - (a) promote e-commerce for use by businesses and by consumers;
 - (b) contribute to the harmonisation of the region's e-commerce policies;
 - (c) promote the development of e-commerce infrastructure, services and applications in ways relevant to the needs of users in the region; and
 - (d) facilitate the electronic delivery of government services.
2. These initiatives will enhance the capabilities of APEC economies to harness available information technologies to function effectively in the emerging digital economy.
3. Recognising the primacy of the private sector in this field, Ministers have recommended an enhanced partnership with the private sector to ensure the success of these efforts.
4. Ministers also expressed commitment to work co-operatively with other APEC fora that have also undertaken e-commerce activity, in particular the APEC Electronic Commerce Task Force¹. Both Singapore and Australia are co-chairs of this Task Force.

B. Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Conformity Assessment

5. Ministers endorsed the World's first multilateral MRA covering telecommunications equipment. The MRA will reduce technical barriers to trade in telecommunications equipment by allowing equipment to be tested in

the exporting economy in accordance with the importing economy's standards. Telecommunications equipment can then be accepted in the importing economy with minimal further regulatory action, thereby shortening manufacturers' time to market.

6. Negotiations on the MRA were concluded in a short space of 9 months with the majority of APEC economies today indicating their willingness to commit dates for their participation.

Universal Access Principles

7. Ministers also addressed a key impediment to economies' transition into the digital economy, that is, access to basic telecommunications infrastructure. The Ministers endorsed a list of Universal Access Principles which will provide guidance on how APEC economies should address this task in a manner consistent with existing legal and regulatory environments of each economy.

Global Learning Consortium

8. Singapore's Communications Minister Mah Bow Tan added his "signature" to those of Canada's Industry Minister John Manley and Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge today in a landmark application of digital signatures to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on international applications of information technology in education.
9. Minister Mah finalized the MOU digitally before Ministers from member economies at the 3rd APEC Ministerial Meeting on the Telecommunications & Information Industry in Singapore. Minister Manley and Governor Ridge had already used personalized keys to "sign" the MOU from their respective offices in the days preceding the meeting. This event marks the world's first digital signature of an international government document.

10. The MOU creates the Global Learning Consortium, which will serve as the hub for an international learning network that will link students, educators and researchers in education.
11. Under the MOU, students and teachers representing each Consortium member will use telecommunications technologies such as the information highway, teleconferencing and videoconferencing to collaborate on projects. Each partner will showcase four to five of their best practices in education on a common web site (<http://www.glc-cag.org>) that each will host for eight-to-twelve-month periods on a rotating basis.
12. Scope of the Consortium

The MOU aims to:

- a. Support the goals of the respective member's existing educational and learning technology programmes - Singapore's IT Masterplan for Education, Canada's SchoolNet, and Pennsylvania's Link-to-Learn;
 - b. Provide opportunities for technology transfers, and support each other's research and development efforts in the area of learning technologies; and
 - c. Encourage global openness and exchange of information to promote a knowledge-based 21st century global learning community where educators and students can learn at anytime and from anywhere.
13. Other nations have already expressed keen interest in joining Singapore, Canada and Pennsylvania in the Global Learning Consortium, building and maintaining the web site and other resources that will serve students and teachers around the world. In the autumn of 1998, the three partners and other potential members will meet in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to advance the Consortium.

14. The digital signing of the document is facilitated by GNS Inc. using Entrust technology and Singapore's Netrust Pte Ltd, South East Asia's first Certification Authority.

Ministers-Industry Dialogue

15. The first of such sessions was held as a means of enhancing the greater partnership between the private and public sectors. It was hailed as a success by Ministers. Ministers were encouraged by industry's commitment to the APEC process.