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Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Policy and Legal Issues for the Heads of Ministries and Agencies of Turkmenistan

Ashgabat, 13-14 June 2012

Report of the Seminar

I. Background

Over the past decade, information and communication technologies (ICT) have become strategic ingredients of national competitiveness and sustainable development. These technologies, if efficiently applied, and if supported by appropriate policies, have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of the economy and to work as a catalyst for innovative development. However, their application also gives rise to a variety of legal and regulatory issues and challenges for policymakers.

Turkmenistan is a country which introduced the Internet services in 2007. The Government is carefully considering further usage of the ICT to introduce new government services and to enhance the competitiveness of the country. Therefore, the theme of the UNECE Seminar was considered as timely and relevant to the needs of the country.

At the request of the Government of Turkmenistan, UNECE organized the Seminar on ICT Policy and Legal Issues for the Heads of Ministries and Agencies of Turkmenistan from 13 to 14 June 2012 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. This national high-level Seminar was jointly organized with the Ministry of Economy and Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

The Seminar was one of a series of capacity-building activities which the UNECE has been conducting in Central Asia to support high-level policymakers in their endeavour to create an enabling ICT policy and regulatory framework. It is part of the planned activities in 2012 of the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

II. Attendance

A total of 65 senior policymakers and government experts attended two full days of the Seminar, including 8 Deputy Ministers and Heads of agencies that indicated strong cross-sectoral interest on this particular issue. Senior policymakers who attended included:

- Deputy Minister of Economy and Development
- Deputy Minister of Finance
- Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Industry
- Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection
- Deputy Minister of Nature Protection
- Deputy Minister of Water Resources
- Deputy Minister of Agriculture
- Deputy Minister of Energy and Industry
- Chairman of the Committee on Science, Education and Culture, Parliament of Turkmenistan
- Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Statistics
- Deputy Director of the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development
- Secretary of the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda of Turkmenistan
- Director of the Turkmen National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan.

III. Objectives of the Seminar

The objective of the Seminar was to provide support to policymakers of Turkmenistan regarding issues related to ICT development, including enhancing awareness on the complexities of the legal aspects of ICT; the preparation of harmonized legal and regulatory frameworks that facilitate the development of e-government and other e-services in the country; the conduct of domestic and international trade using ICT; addressing issues related to ICT security and legal protection; and regulation of ICT related crimes.

In order to assist senior policymakers, UNECE has prepared a publication, “ICT Policy and Legal Issues for Central Asia – Guide for ICT Policymakers” both in English and in Russian. The publication as well as other supporting documents and training materials were distributed to all participants in CD-ROMs which were especially prepared for this Seminar.

IV. Outcome of the Seminar

The Seminar provided these high-level policymakers an opportunity to review the national legal system related to ICT, including the following aspects: legal ICT infrastructure; legal certainty; legal ICT security; legal protection and issues related to ICT crimes. During the Seminar, participating policymakers were actively involved in the discussions. Aspects related to the national concept and strategies on knowledge-based development in Turkmenistan were also addressed by participating policymakers.

V. Feedback received from participants

38 questionnaires were returned. Based on the feedback provided by the questionnaires, participants considered that: the seminar was very relevant to the needs of Turkmenistan (100%); they were satisfied with the quality of the Seminar (100%); and rated that the Seminar as useful (100%). The followings are some of the qualitative opinions received from the participants:

1. Areas where participating policymakers would like to receive support from UNECE in the future:

- Capacity-building support to integrate/link ICT policies into the national innovation system
- Further support in developing ICT policies in Turkmenistan
- Follow-up seminars on ICT policy and legal issues with greater outreach to policymakers
- Specialized trainings on ICT policy and legal issues for legal practitioners
- Practical trainings on ICT policy and legal issues for specialists
- Trainings on e-government
- Training materials in the area of ICT policy development
- Advisory support/recommendations for drafting legislation in the area of ICT in Turkmenistan
- Advisory support to incorporate cyber-security dimensions into ICT policies
- Capacity-building support related to ICT protection and computer fraud.

2. Ways in which participating policymakers will utilize the acquired knowledge:

- Drafting/adopting specific legislation in the area of ICT/ICT policy
- Preparing e-commerce related legislations
- Developing e-government/other capacity-building programme related to ICT policy
- Creating programmes for economic development
- Preparing events on data protection which the ministry is planning
- Setting up training programmes in the area of ICT policy and organizing seminars and workshop

3. Suggestions and overall comments received:

- Introduce data protection dimension into future ICT capacity-building activities
- Take more time on cyber-security, ICT legal security and legal protection issues
- Define needed legislation for the implementation of e-government services.

VI. Other business

At the closing session, the representatives of the Government of Turkmenistan expressed their appreciation to UNECE for organizing the Seminar in a timely manner, which was considered extremely relevant to the needs of the country. Participating policymakers from various ministries expressed their wishes that UNECE would organize a follow-up seminar on the same subject for targeted audiences in the near future.

The Seminar was reported by various media in Turkmenistan, such as the State News Agency of Turkmenistan. Please refer to:

http://turkmenistan.gov.tm/_eng/?id=932

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/highlights/unece_weekly/weekly_2012/Weekly_484.pdf
