

Speech by Minister for Communications and Information

Opening of the PNG IXP meetings with ISOC

19th June 2014

NICTA CEO, Mr. Charles Punaha

[Heads of ICT Operators]

[Representatives from Government departments and agencies]

[Representatives from Academia]

[Representatives of interest groups (Comp Society)]

Ladies and Gentleman,

A very good morning to you all. It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the start of this two day event together with our partners from the Internet Society, or ISOC, for short.

I understand with us today from ISOC are **Ms Jane Coffin, Director Development Strategy (based in America), and Ms Duangthip Chomprang, Manager Regional Affairs with the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau (based in Thailand)**. I also understand that another colleague of theirs, **Mr. Philip Smith (based in Australia)**, will be joining us later on today; on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, let me wish you three a warm welcome to our capital city Port Moresby and it is indeed a great pleasure to have you as our guests for these 4 days until you return home on Saturday.

I have noted that ISOC has carried out similar programs in other parts of the world which have seen great success and I am optimistic that these 2 day event, starting today and ending tomorrow, will share the same success.

As I understand it, ISOCs mission is to ensure everyone; everywhere has access to, and benefits from the Internet. This is a noble aspiration and one that GoPNG also has for its people. The Government recognises that ICT and the Internet are indispensable tools for development in these modern times.

I believe over the next 2 days, with the help of ISOC, we can reach consensus on key issues affecting the development and the growth of the internet in our country.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Starting in 2007 with the liberalisation of the mobile communication sector and then in 2008 with the issuance of the new ICT policy, GoPNG is committed to ensuring ICT services are made widely accessible to all its people at affordable prices and acceptable quality. The government has introduced competition in the ICT market to facilitate these objectives.

I am pleased and satisfied to say that since GoPNG took these critical policy decisions, the ICT market has grown enormously by some 45%, when you consider the mobile sector alone, and has made significant contribution to national GDP particularly with the entrance of Digicel PNG in 2007.

To further harness the benefits of ICT and the internet, I am pleased to announce that GoPNG, in December 2013, also endorsed the National Broadband Policy and National Broadband Strategic Action Plan 2013 to 2018 to facilitate the growth of broadband in PNG. Among other things, the policy promotes the implementation of the e-array of applications such as e-government, e-education, e-health and so on.

Ladies and Gentleman,

One underlying objective that resonates in this new policy and the overarching ICT policy of 2008 is the need for affordable ICT services. Since introduction of competition in the mobile sector, call rates have come down by some 65%. However the same cannot be said about the retail costs of the internet. Few credible studies on the cost of internet in the region have shown that Papua New Guinea has one of the highest internet rates in the Pacific.

As the Minister responsible for ICT, these deeply concerns me and I have made a specific request to NICTA, as the ICT regulator and government agency responsible for implementing GoPNG ICT policy, to bring down the internet retail rates and make internet access more affordable for our people.

Ladies and Gentleman,

In this respect, I am delighted to see that NICTA is seriously considering my plea and has taken a number of steps to address the issues of Accessibility and Affordability. I am especially delighted today, that these events organised together with ISOC and you, our important stakeholders, will further consider technical means of setting up an Internet Exchange Point (IXP) in PNG that should translate to lower internet retail rates in the near future.

As I conclude today, let me take this moment to also recognise and congratulate our ICT operators for without their ongoing confidence and investment in the ICT market in PNG, we would not be where we are now.

I implore you today, along with the other stakeholders here representing key government departments, academia, and interest groups - in the true spirit of corporation, to maximise on this opportunity and the expertise of our partner and friends from ISOC, to agree on certain outcomes that will potentially establish a PNG IXP and further address high retail costs of internet in the country.

I understand the matter of internet security or cyber security, as it's commonly referred to, will also be discussed so I hope that serious discussions and solutions can also be formulated here.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Finally with these words, I wish you all a 2 days of successful meetings and I now officially declare the proceedings open.

Thank you all and God bless Papua New Guinea.

Hon. Jimmy Miringtoro, MP

Minister for Communications and Information