

Tasman Asia Pacific wins financing study role on “Telecommunications and Connectivity Situation in Pacific island countries. including telecommunications (satellite and fiber optic cable) infrastructure and information services (Nov 2006 – March 2007)”

Tasman Asia Pacific (Dr Michael Porter) has won the lead finance sector role in a UN ESCAP Study on the current connectivity situation, including telecommunications (satellite and fiber optic cable) infrastructure and information services in Pacific island countries.

A Technical Consultation on “Enhancing Pacific Connectivity” was held at ESCAP in Bangkok from 13 to 14 November 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to review and agree on a comprehensive study outline on possible options for the establishment of satellite based connectivity for the Pacific island countries, and its long-term operation, development and services.

This financing options study will form part of the overall study on Pacific connectivity so the consultant is expected to take into consideration other related studies being done on detailed stock-taking exercise, satellite technical options and their economic and commercial viability. The consultant will be required to take part in consultation meeting in early November 2006 with ESCAP staff responsible for the project and with other consultants and experts involved in the study before starting work on the study on financing options of Pacific connectivity with emphasis on satellite communication systems, to avoid un-necessary duplication and to improve the consistence of the study among its team members.

Related Information

Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, inaugurated the November 2006 meeting. The messages of Mr. Anwarul Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and of Mr. Yiping Zhou, Director, Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of UNDP, were delivered. Attending the meeting were experts from Australia, China, India and Thailand, and representatives from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the South-South Unit (Asia and the Pacific) of UNDP Regional Centre, UN EPOC, ICSTD, TID and LDC Coordination Unit of ESCAP.

The Chief of Space Technology Applications Section presented the background and objective of the meeting. It was suggested that a number of technical options with specific economic and commercial viability issues be discussed. The structure of the study was proposed as follows:

The role of the study in achieving the objectives of the project. The study will assess the current connectivity situation, including telecommunication infrastructure and information services in Pacific island countries; analyze their needs for the connectivity and the limitations and opportunities for improving the connectivity; suggest new initiatives and action agendas to meet identified needs; analyze technical options including their economic and commercial viabilities and impacts, and propose innovative investment mechanism. The study will work as the basis for the policy makers of Pacific island countries and relevant stakeholders for development of strategies and substantive actions towards enhancing the connectivity.

Role of the Consultant. The consultant will form part of the team working on the study on Pacific connectivity issues. Under the general guidance of Chief, Information, Communications and Space Technology Division (ICSTD), and the direct supervision of the Chief of the Least Developed Countries Coordination Unit, the consultant will work as a member of consultants’

team with a special responsibility of preparing a detailed study on connectivity issues in Pacific island countries, with particular emphasis on possible financing options.

The Tasman Asia Pacific consultant will put together the four relevant studies into one consistent study and write an executive summary.

The Tasman Asia Pacific consultant, Dr Michael Porter, attended the consultative meeting in November and will also present the study on financing options at the Expert Group Meeting in Fiji in the first quarter of 2007.

Methodology. The financing options study will draw heavily from a detailed stock-taking study been done by ESCAP on Pacific connectivity that comprise part of the comprehensive study and is to be provided by ESCAP before the November consultation meeting. The stock-taking study will cover such areas as:

- (a) Existing information and communication facilities and coverage in terms of both fibre optics and communication satellites, including ground facilities;
- (b) Differences among countries in terms of technical standards and rules and regulations;
- (c) Costs and benefits of the various solutions explored to date;
- (d) Existing service providers;
- (e) Current licensing arrangements;
- (f) An assessment of past efforts for regional cooperation: lessons learnt.

The financing options study will reflect desk analysis of existing material, including national socioeconomic development plans and previous studies and recommendations; analyze development trends of relevant technical fields and their economic aspects; interviews with relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors and international and regional organizations. All sources will be included in the list of References. All supporting data should be referenced and included in the Annexes.
