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Welcome Address

By

David M Thorup

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Welcome Address to the Expert Group Meeting
on Integrating Information Systems/Technology
in Local/Regional Development Planning
by
Mr. David M. Thorup
Deputy Regional Representative
United Nations Development Programme

Singapore, 31 October 1988

Honorable Chairman of the
National Computer Board,

Mr. Secretary General of AMIC

Mr. Director of UNCRD,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

About four years ago, when I was dealing with the planning of new regional projects to be supported by the United Nations Development Programme, I encouraged the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to set up a facility which would help to advise and provide a means for consultation on technical requirements and technology choices in the management information systems of governments in the region. Our motivation for such a project was the need of many Governments to share their experience with others in order to help in defining the right options and, equally, to help steer clear of unnecessary waste and time lost through insufficient knowledge and ill-advised experiments and decisions.

Your meeting, which will soon be underway, only helps to emphasize how rapidly the resources of information systems and technology are expanding and reaching every part of our work and how quickly the sophistication of processes and techniques brings about the need to renew our knowledge, to update our approaches and to do so by sharing our most recent experience with our colleagues from other countries. What you will be discussing during the rest of this week might, at first look, seem to an outsider to be quite theoretical or abstruse and yet my organization, UNDP, which is not actually making any substantive input to this meeting, is actively involved in supporting the use and practical application of exactly the technology which you are here to discuss.

A few months ago UNDP completed a project, the second of two such exercises in Malaysia, which have worked to help improve the planning methods at the level of State Economic Planning Units. The first of these was in the State of Kedah, the latest in Kelantan. As you know, one of your speakers at the first technical session this morning will tell you much more about the use of information systems in that same part of Malaysia and no doubt will recall some of the work in which our planning expert collaborated.

Later this year, UNDP is planning to assign a pair of consultants to work in Malaysia in order to fulfill a spe-

cial intellectual task which my Headquarters has decided to carry out on a global scale. UNDP has decided to prepare a series of monographs on Government Systems of Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Planning. One of the monographs will focus on the pioneering work of the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Office. You will have this same work described to you by the Deputy Director of that Unit at your session tomorrow morning. It is a welcome coincidence that the Central Evaluation Office of UNDP has identified the very same government body, as a leading example of work in this field, about which you will also learn in detail.

Here in Singapore, UNDP is presently embarked on a very challenging project aimed at creating a Land Information Data Base. This is pilot work, which we hope will provide an example to be replicated on a worldwide scale. The objective is to bring together through a system which can allow access by all users, of all the data which is collected and maintained by all government departments concerned with land use and planning. The conceptual work leading up to implementation of the present project, as our keynote speaker knows already, was done by a member of his staff at the National Computer Board, who will also be participating in your deliberations.

As you can see, our association with many of the Government representatives participating in this meeting is already very stimulating and fruitful. Certainly the same can be said of our cooperation with our colleagues at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development and it is for this reason that it is such an honour and privilege to be invited to assist in welcoming you all to this Meeting. Of course it is also a great privilege to participate in a meeting which is being hosted by our friends in Singapore. I am sure that you will find, during the brief period of your stay here that your hosts at AMIC, and the Government of Singapore, will be doing everything possible not only to make your discussions most fruitful, but to make your stay so enjoyable that you will go away feeling stimulated and inspired as well as grateful for the opportunity to work in this environment and enjoy this wonderful city.

May I therefore thank our hosts and wish you well in your work.