Joint Communiqué

1. The Inaugural Assembly of the IPAIT was held from July 23 to July 26 at the Shilla Hotel in Seoul, with the participation of 86 parliamentarians from 35 countries.

2. At the Opening Ceremony, Hon. HUH Unna, Chairwoman of the Preparatory Committee gave the Opening Remarks. Hon. CHO Boo Young, Vice-Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea gave the Welcoming Remarks in place of His Excellency PARK Kwan Yong, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.
Chairwoman HUH Unna explained in her Remarks the progress of the establishment of the Association and stated that the key objective of the IPAIT is the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among parliaments and parliamentarians for the advancement of information technology. The Chairwoman also stated that given how the digital divide is widening gaps in various fields including the economy, education, health, welfare and environment, the urgent need to address the digital divide became the main theme of the Inaugural Assembly. Furthermore, she expressed her anticipation for ways facilitating dialogue and cooperation to be sought through the results of the conference.
 Speaker PARK Kwan Yong stated in his Remarks that while advancement of information technology contributed towards expanding the welfare of mankind by stimulating economic growth and bringing convenience to our lives, it also widened social and economic gaps between countries and classes. The Speaker also noted other negative aspects of IT such as the invasion of privacy and other similar social problems from unscreened dissemination of harmful online information. He recalled that one of the aims of the IPAIT is searching ways to minimize these side effects. He believed that the Conference would provide the venue for sharing ideas and solutions for the era of information technology.

3. At the First Session, the Charter of the Association was adopted. Hon. HUH Unna, Chairwoman of the Preparatory Committee was elected the President of the Association. Joint Communiqu_ Drafting Committee was formed and a Steering Committee comprised of eight countries-Algeria, Belgium, China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Venezuela-was established, and moderators for the country report and panel discussions were designated.

4. During the Second and the Third Session, delegations gave reports on the advancements of information technology in their home countries. The Assembly served as a meaningful forum to share experiences of IT-related advances in both advanced and developing countries, where each of the models presented could serve as useful information for another country's development of IT strategy. These reports will be collated and distributed to all delegates. In addition, Thailand has proposed some key IT-related issues for the member countries to jointly develop, region by region, as stated by the Steering Committee in their recommendations.

5. During the Commemorative Presentations and Reception, a video presentation by Bill Gates under the title of "Digital Decade for Everyone"_ was shown. Vice-President of e-Biz group of KT gave his remarks on "Changes in IT Trends & Their Effects" and President Hans Peter Klaey of SAP Asia 10,

delivered his speech on "Turning Digital Divide into Digital Dividends"."

6. At the Fourth Session, Hon. Lee Sang Chul, Minister of Information and Communication of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Kim Hong Ki, President of Samsung SDS, and Mr. Ko Won Yong, President of HIST, gave talks on "e-Government & Social Divide", "e-Biz & Economic Divide",and "e-Learning & Educational Divide" respectively, followed by panel discussions. Hon. Tuan Naidu of Malaysia moderated over Theme I and Hon. Martii Tiuri of Finland, Hon. Somkiat Onwimon of Thailand, and Hon. Kate Lundy of Australia participated as Panelists. Hon. S.S. Ahluwalia of India moderated over Theme II and Hon. Kwak Chi Young of the Republic of Korea and Hon. Prasang Mongkonsiri of Thailand participated as Panelists. Professor Mark Sceats of Australia moderated over Theme III, and Hon. Song Young Gil of the Republic of Korea, Hon. Wiboon Shamsheun of Thailand and Hon. Yan Yixun of China sat in as Panelists.

7. It was decided that an IPAIT website should be established as soon as possible.

8. It was recommended that the next General Assembly will convene some time in July or August 2003 in Thailand.

9. The Inaugural Assembly agreed on the following:

    a. The information technology revolution is one of the most remarkable revolutions that the history of mankind has yet experienced. By making knowledge and information key factors for national production in today's information society, information technology is changing the overall landscape of society.
    b. Information technology is propelling growth not only for the economy but also for many other areas such as education, health and environment, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the overall welfare of society. The exchange of information is essential to promote a better understanding and improve the level of respect between different cultures.
    c. Human capital boosts economic growth and the introduction of information technology in less developed and developing countries have the potential to play a decisive role in accumulating human capital.
    d. The digital divide does in fact exist in the globalized economy and causes less developed and developing countries to lose their competitiveness. This, in turn, deepens the poor-get-poorer and the rich-get-richer phenomenon.
    e. Unless immediate measures for closing the digital divide are implemented, the gap will only widen further.
    f. Information advancements and poverty eradication in less developed and developing countries are directly linked to the continuous growth of the world economy. As a result, IT-developed nations must exert active efforts to eliminate the digital divide.
    g. Due to constraints in finance, human capital and technological capabilities less developed and developing countries have difficulty

introducing information technologies in their countries. Therefore advanced countries, the World Bank, the UNDP and other IT-related international organizations must discuss, in earnest, the agenda on the elimination of the global digital divide.

h. No one should be excluded from the benefits of information society. Less developed and developing countries must be guaranteed participation in setting up international policies regarding informatization such as developing digital contents and internet domains. The development of digital society and widespread use of IT may enhance cyber crime. All nations, regardless of their role in IT development, must exert active efforts to eliminate it, provided it shall not be used to inhibit legitimate use of the Internet.

i. Growth of IT includes society, culture, economy and law among others. In this regard, the Parliament of each country, as the leader of policy making in the digitalization process, must fully exercise its rights to allocate budget and reduce tax as a means of encouraging growth in the IT sector.

j. In order to reduce educational divide and to enhance e-Learning, the Parliaments of each country, as the leaders of policy making in the educational process, should exercise their rights to encourage incorporation of IT education into regular schooling.

k. The Inaugural Assembly will distribute this Joint Communiqué to Parliaments, governments and IT-related public and private international organizations, to make certain that they recognize the importance of closing the digital divide.

10. The Inaugural Assembly resolves to:

a. Reaffirm its commitment to take on a central role in overcoming the issue of digital divide both at the international level between developed and less developed countries and at the national level between regions and classes.

b. Urge countries to adopt an action plan for eliminating the information gap between countries at the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva between December 10th and 12th next year and in Tunisia in the year 2005.

c. Reaffirm that the process of globalization and the IT revolution should enhance and promote respect for cultural and ethnic identities along with their related systems of values.

d. Call on the UN General Assembly to hold a discussion on digital divide and to adopt a resolution thereof, particularly with regard to maximizing the availability of e-Education and e-Health.

e. Urge the Secretary General of the UN to take steps so that other UN organizations may exert greater efforts to close the digital divide.

f. Urge the UN to establish a task force to devise and provide guidelines for bridging the information gap.

g. Urge the World Bank and other international financial development organizations and funds to set up a special fund for less developed and developing countries to build basic infrastructures for information technology and to promote e-Education and development of e-Health services.

h. Urge IT-developed countries to devise special plans to help less developed countries accumulate human capital and receive technological support.

    i. Call on governments to urge to promote the use of open source software for e-Government, e-Commerce/e-Business and e-Education development so that the people will have equal chance to employ such software without financial barrier.

    j. Urge each government to provide incentives for private companies so that they can actively assist in narrowing the information divide. Such incentives are encouragements including taxes and duties on IT, telecommunications services and the provision of tax incentives for research and development particularly in the areas of e-Education and e-Health services.

    k. The General Assembly of the International Parliamentarians' Association for Information Technology thanks the authorities of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea for its kindness in hosting this important meeting in which fellow Parliamentarians and businessmen of all around the world had the opportunity to share experiences and organize themselves towards reducing the digital divide and to set the information technology to the service of society. The General Assembly of the IPAIT would like to express its recognition to the people of Korea for their warm welcome extended to the delegations of the participating countries.

* The General Assembly recommends the issue of the brain-drain phenomenon to be discussed on the next conference.

Recommendation of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, chaired by Hon. Peter Vanhoutte of Belgium and composed of Hon. Moussa Benhamadi of Algeria, Hon. Yan Yixun of China, Hon. S.S. Ahluwalia of India, Hon. Tuan Naidu of Malaysia, Hon. Unna Huh of the Republic of Korea, Hon. Wiboon Shamsheun of Thailand and Hon. Luis Acua Cedeo of Venezuela, recommends the General Assembly to consider the issues hereby on one of the following Conferences:

I. Proposals of the Thai Delegation

1. "Lingual Conversion Tools":-To joint-develop basic tools to facilitate lingual conversion in the development of e-Government, e-Commerce/e-Business and e-Education in order to bridge language barrier in different countries in each region and in the digital world as a whole.

2. "Regional Knowledge Portal":-To develop regional cooperation in order to expose and provide essential information via a specific website which can lead to the promotion of Joint development of e-Government, e-Commerce/e-Business and e-Education: including joint venture investment in ICT Industry, Services, Agriculture and Tourism in the region.

3. "Internet Super-Gateways":-Regional cooperation on direct Internet links among the Internet Gateways of member countries in certain high speed bandwidths should be developed in order to encourage the usage of Internet in the less developed countries. These links should be continually monitored and upgraded as the traffic increases.

4. "IPAIT e-Learning Resources":-To develop, by regional collaboration, the common and affordable Educational Infrastructure, Databases and

Instructional Resources for schools without any bearing costs or expenses.

5. "IPAIT Professional Development Program":-Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of e-Activities, especially the e-Parliament, under each member country's e-Government program on technology transfer through training, consulting, and visiting programmes will help develop human resources of the IPAIT. This cooperation can be extendable to e-Commerce/e-Business and e-Education as well.

II. Proposal of the Croatian Delegation

1. An in-depth discussion on defining IT-standards and the financing on Internet exchange.