

APEC eyes high-speed broadband networks by 2020

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A man in Tokyo surfs the Internet. Asian and Pacific countries have agreed to help establish next-generation high-speed broadband networks in their region by 2020, overcoming the "digital divide" between rich and poor nations.

Asian and Pacific countries agreed on Sunday to help establish next-generation high-speed broadband networks in their region by 2020, overcoming the "digital divide" between rich and poor nations.

The accord was mentioned in a declaration adopted by telecommunications and information ministers from the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum at the end of a two-day meeting in Okinawa, Japan.

The declaration, which will be submitted to the APEC summit scheduled

for mid-November in Yokohama, Japan, was posted on the website of the Japanese internal affairs and communications ministry.

It said: "We recommend that the TEL (APEC Telecommunications and Information Working Group) works toward achieving the ambitious goal of access to next generation high speed [broadband](#) by 2020 to expand and improve ICT (information and communications technologies) infrastructure for knowledge-based economies in the APEC region."

"We acknowledge that the digital divide in the APEC region remains an obstacle to accessing the full benefits offered by ICT," the document said.

"We recognise that enhancing opportunities to access information through initiatives such as infrastructure development need to be a priority."

The ministers welcomed that APEC economies have "largely" achieved their goal of "universal Internet access by 2010" in terms of infrastructure, the document said. The goal was set in 2000.

"We reaffirm our commitment toward achieving the goal of universal access to (current-generation) broadband in the APEC region by 2015," it added.

Internet broadband subscriptions have increased from 0.2 per 100 inhabitants in the region in 1999 to 10.8 in 2009, an APEC document said.

But access to the Internet varies between APEC member economies, Kyodo news agency said.

It said the broadband penetration rate stands at 0.7 percent in Indonesia

and 2.8 percent in Peru, while it reaches 27.1 percent in the United States and 24.9 percent in Japan.

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