Message from the Minister of Information and Communication Technology

Technology has a habit of changing much more than what its inventors had originally envisioned. First the wheel, then the car and then the aeroplane shrunk the world and made it a much more compact place. Information technology changed the way we worked and the very fabric of society no less profoundly than the industrial revolution of a century ago.

Today we are at the cusp of yet another revolution which has been borne out of the synergy where Information Technology and Communication Technology meet. It has affected every part of our lives, and the way we learn is no exception. eLearning has been around for quite some time, but before the advent of the World Wide Web, before Digital Rights Management and Public Key Infrastructure technology, it remained mainly a one-way medium. Today, that one-way street has the potential to be a two-way avenue, not just for learning per se, and not even for interactive learning but for building entire secure communities of practice and learning together, even though physically apart.

Education is a valuable investment in its own right, but ICTs have made it into an exciting new industry, complete with the challenges and opportunities that accompany the opening of any new frontier. Micro-payments through smartphones and the web will soon make education-on-demand a reality and the economies of scale will lead to lower prices and better services through increased competition. At the same time, a much larger number of people will benefit from these projects throughout Thailand and indeed, throughout the Asia-Pacific region, as we move beyond the elite and early adopters and towards the masses who have the most to gain.

It is indeed a great honour for the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of the Royal Thai Government to host this inaugural International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society. I am sure that it will be the first of many successful conferences that will help focus the future of eLearning not just in the Asia-Pacific region, but indeed, throughout the entire world.

(Surapong Suebwonglee)
Minister of Information and Communication Technology