Internet Society presents first report focusing on Internet development in Central Asia

Internet Environment Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic reveals access outpaces adoption

[Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan – November 24, 2015] – The Internet Society has published its first report focusing on Internet development in Central Asia. Highlighting the discrepancy between levels of Internet access in the country versus rates of adoption, the "Kyrgyz Internet Environment Assessment" https://www.internetsociety.org/publications/kyrgyz-internet-environment-assessment provides an analysis of the current Internet environment, focusing on both the opportunities and the potential barriers to further development of the Internet in the region.

A key indicator of any Internet environment is the percentage of its population using the Internet. In Kyrgyzstan approximately 25% of citizens are online while 75% are offline. This rate is lower than in neighboring countries such as Kazakhstan and Russia and is due to factors such as income levels, government policies, regulations and affordability.

"Kyrgyzstan holds strong promise for a growing Internet ecosystem. However multiple stakeholders including the government, the private sector and international organizations need to work together to continue liberalization of the communications infrastructure and provide more connectivity for both local and international operators. Connectivity and access are vital to making the benefits of the Internet available to everyone," explains Frédéric Donck, Regional Bureau Director for Europe at the Internet Society.

While only a quarter of the population is online, it is important to note that Internet access is outpacing adoption. While more than 50% of the population of Kyrgyzstan is covered by a 3G mobile broadband signal, only 20% of that population are Internet users.

"According to our analysis, the main reasons for this gap between Internet availability and adoption are lack of affordability and relevance," adds Maarit Palovirta, Internet Society's Regional Affairs Manager for Europe.

Locally relevant content is a notable way to increase the benefits of those who already use the Internet, while helping to encourage non-users to connect. The majority of online content in Kyrgyzstan is in English, which is relevant to a small portion of the population. There is a significant amount of online content available in Russian but content in Kyrgyz language – which is important in attracting rural users – is lagging behind.

Other key recommendations outlined in the report that would contribute to Internet development efforts in the Kyrgyz Republic include:

- Regulatory and policy actions to reduce cross-border price markups to improve international connectivity.
- Building the role of Internet Exchange Points (IXP) to allow the exchange of domestic and international Internet traffic and content.
- Ensuring that operators have sufficient spectrum and that they share new and existing infrastructure to help extend networks, particularly to underserved rural areas.

The results of the report will be presented during the Open Government Information Week Forum organized by the Kyrgyz government, World Bank and United Nations Development Program, which is being held in this week in Bishkek.

About the Internet Society
The Internet Society, www.internetsociety.org, is the trusted independent source for Internet information and thought leadership from around the world. It is also the organizational home for the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). With its principled vision and substantial technological foundation, the Internet Society promotes open dialogue on Internet policy, technology, and future development among users, companies, governments, and other organizations. Working with its members and Chapters around the world, the Internet Society enables the continued evolution and growth of the Internet for everyone.

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