E-Government in Korea
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As e-government is widely being acknowledged as the core strategy for the knowledge-based information society in the 21st century, Korea and other advanced countries are driving to institute an e-government. It is recognized that e-government is the optimal strategy for providing quality user-friendly government services expeditiously without the constraints of time and space, improving administrative productivity with lower costs and higher efficiency, and creating an open government under which all citizens are connected to each other through information networks.

Competition among nations is expected to intensify in the future, as each nation strives to lay a firm foundation for enhancing their national competitiveness. In order to thrive in the age of real-time transactions an effective and responsive e-government must be established.

Since the late-1980s, Korea has consistently pursued e-government. First, it paved the way for e-government by conducting projects such as the National Basic Information System and the high-speed information and communications infrastructure project. Then it introduced advanced information systems for key government functions by conducting a range of innovative projects designed to promote the adoption of such information systems by the nation and the society as a whole. In particular, 11 major tasks are being carried out under the auspices of the e-government special committee. In addition the government further is trying to streamline government working processes. However, more concentrated efforts are required to reach the ultimate goals of e-government which are to improve the productivity and transparency of administration and to enhance the quality of administrative services to create added value.

Korea’s e-government is expanding the nature of its development from quantitative growth to a qualitative maturity. Up to this point, through the benchmarking practices of advanced countries, Korea has focused on laying the foundation for e-government. Now it is time to add values to this foundation.

It is my sincere wish that this booklet will facilitate the sharing of the experiences accumulated by the e-government project in Korea and to enhance international cooperation in the future.

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Suh, Sam Young
President of National Computerization Agency
The vision of e-government in Korea is to increase productivity and transparency through the strategic use of information technology in the public sector and ultimately contribute to enhancing the national competitiveness and positioning Korea as an advanced nation. In this regard, the three strategic objectives of e-government are formulated as follows:

- **A government that provides the best administrative services to individuals**
  
  Citizens can apply for and be provided with administrative services at home through an online single window. Databases essential to civil affairs are shared by relevant institutions for efficient processing, allowing citizens to forgo multiple trips to public institutions. In addition, all administrative institutions will disclose the processing of civil affairs.

- **A government that provides the right support for business**

  The e-government paves the way for the creation of new businesses by establishing the IT infrastructure, supporting venture companies, developing technologies, fostering human resources, and refining laws and regulations. It also pursues to fine-tune standards for e-business, expand and upgrade electronic transactions and create a safe online marketplace. The G2B project (integrated electronic government procurement system) will streamline all central, provincial, and military procurement services into a single point of service for enhanced operational efficiency and transparency.

- **A government with improved productivity, transparency and democracy**

  The e-government lays a firm foundation in which to introduce information systems to core operations including finance, education and human resources. It will enable paperless administration through the EEX system, enhancing the productivity and efficiency in public services. In addition, the entire workflow is processed electronically for improving transparency. Compared with the unilateral communication in the past, bilateral communication between the government and citizens is more likely to lead to a democratic e-government.
The first initiative in creating an e-government dates back to the late 1980’s when the government embarked the National Basic Information System Project (NBIS Project), which focused on deploying strategic use of IT applications and systems nationwide. Major DBs of critical information deemed necessary for public management functions such as information on residents, finance, land and vehicles registration were completed through the first and second phases of the NBIS Project (1987~1996). Now citizens can have access to convenient government services thanks to such DBs including issuance of certificates by making a single trip to any of the local offices. The numbers of documents submitted to government offices are greatly reduced, and the processing time is also shortened drastically.

Since the mid-1990’s, the efforts for an e-government have started taking a more definite shape through various national level initiatives. In 1994, the Ministry of Communication was reorganized as the Ministry of Information and Communication. In 1995, the Framework Act for Informatization Promotion was enacted and the National Framework Plan for Informatization Promotion was formulated in the following year. In 1996, the Informatization Promotion Council was organized. In addition, a high-speed backbone network was established in 1997. Furthermore, the government appointed chief information officers (CIOs) in 1998. In 1999, the National Framework Plan was revised to Cyber Korea 21. More and more Government services such as patent, customs, and procurement are being provided online with improved quality of service.

Although the creation of an e-government has always been recognized as one of the foremost tasks, lack of concerted efforts by individual agencies slowed down further advancement, leaving islands of automated systems. To address this issue, the Council of e-Government under presidential supervision was inaugurated in January 2001 to drive government-wide e-government efforts.

**National Basic Information System (1987~1996)**

As noted earlier, the drive to create an e-government in Korea started in the late 1980’s when the government launched the National Basic Information System Project to deploy IT applications and systems to handle administrative services. The National Administrative Information System (NAIS), which set up major DBs for residents, lands, and vehicles, has uplifted the level of informatization in government administration. The project was launched pursuant to the Act on Dissemination and Utilization Promotion of Computer Network enacted in May 1996 and was funded based on the ‘settlement after investment’ method.

NAIS aims to create a smaller government that enhances citizens’ wellbeing and the efficiency of the government. It also intends to enable systematic integration of administrative services that were offered by different government agencies and local offices, align necessary administrative, institutional and technical supports and to invest the national IT budget in fostering the IT industry. The Government implemented the National Administrative Information System, which is composed of six subsystems: residents, real estates, vehicles, employment, customs and clearance, and economic statistics. As a result, national basic information critical to public administration has been fully digitalized.

One of the major achievements of this project is the enhancement of citizens’ convenience. Typical services including the delivery of notices, issuance of certificates, announcements, reports and statistics ledger management are now processed online. This has simplified the delivery of the services, and has sped up the response time. Computerized one-stop civil administration also brings about a greater awareness of the benefits of information technology to the people and facilitates emergence from the knowledge-based society. Implementation of the National Administrative Information System eliminated the digital divide between cities and provinces by providing equal access to services and information. Interagency information sharing enhances operational efficiency by promoting inter-governmental collaboration and also improves the speed and accuracy of information processing.

**Informatization of Government Services**

With the enactment of the Framework Act for Informatization Promotion in 1995 and the formulation of the National Framework Plan for Informatization Promotion, informatization of government services evolved to a full-scale e-
The National Framework Plan for Informatization Promotion mapped out ten major projects to create a small but efficient e-government, lay the ground for informatization of schools, leverage academic and research information, and sharpen the competitive edge of the industries.

Notable achievements include the KIPOnet enabling online applications for patents and ensuing processes and payment. The Customs Administration Information System introduced to prevent and track down any illegal and fraudulent trading activities and reduce logistic costs in import and export procedures. And finally, the One-stop Service System for Export/Import Cargo (PORT MS) was established to deal with the entire procedure from arrival to departure of ships through computer systems. This was to set up an interagency information sharing system to provide a one-stop service for port logistics.

Integration of Key Public Administration Functions

In order to mediate, monitor and evaluate the e-government initiative, experts from the private sector and deputy ministers of related agencies were gathered to organize the e-government committee in January 2001. This committee formulated 11 strategic initiatives of e-government to be completed by 2002. It also articulated the basic principles and directions of the e-government initiative as:

1. identifying high payoff projects
2. focusing on multi-agency IT projects
3. utilizing existing resources by eliminating redundancy
4. applying IT after driving business process reengineering (BPR)
5. integrating budget allocation

This shifted the focus to intergovernmental information sharing and thus achieved citizen-oriented integrated services such as online public administration services.

In this perspective, various e-government projects have been underway to interconnect the networks and provide integrated online services finally to be in service currently in the end of 2002.

1. Government for Citizens (G4C), which allowed the consolidation of separate individual agencies to manage information on residents, estates and vehicles into 5 major databases.
2. Home Tax Services (HTS) to enable citizens to file, notify, pay and appeal taxes on the Internet.
3. Government to Business (G2B), which serves as a single portal to handle government procurement processes online such as registering, placing bids and receiving payments.
4. Financial information system to generate accurate and real-time information on the government’s budget and funds.
5. Interconnection of the computer networks of four major social insurances (health, national pension, industry accident compensation, and employment insurances).

Successfully carrying out the eleven major initiatives by the end of year 2002, the Korean government is planning to drive another initiative named ‘Beyond e-Gov’ to fulfill a wide range of citizens’ needs and provide various value-added services.

As part of the initiative, the government has launched in April 2002 a 5-year informatization promotion plan, ‘e-KOREA VISION 2006’. The plan focuses on qualitative improvement rather than quantitative expansion and shifts the gears to ‘become the pioneer and leader’ from the current ‘follow the leader’ practice. A smart e-government providing customized online services and open administration is emphasized as the core strategy.

By 2006, public services across government agencies will be accessible online, providing customer-oriented integrated services and enabling all kinds of social and corporate activities to be conducted on the Internet. Furthermore, redundant and overlapping processes as well as unnecessary paperworks will be eliminated.