

**Subject: Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> meeting to decide strategy to implement National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility**

The first meeting to formulate strategy to implement the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility was held under the Chairmanship of Dr. Ajay Kumar, JS DeitY on July 1, 2014 at Department of Electronic and Information Technology (DeitY), New Delhi. The meeting was attended by:

- (i) Dr. Neena Pahuja, DG, ERNET India
- (ii) Shri Sunil Abraham, Centre for Internet & Society, Bangalore
- (iii) Ms. Shilpi Kapoor, Barrier Break Technology, Mumbai
- (iv) Shri Deepak Maheshwari, Symantec, New Delhi
- (v) Shri Lokesh Joshi, NIC, New Delhi
- (vi) Shri S. K. Mahto, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- (vii) Dr. Govind, NIXI
- (ix) Shri Anjan Das, CII
- (x) Shri Dipak Singh, DeitY, New Delhi - Convener

Mrs. Tejal Tiwari and Shri Arvind Shukla from ERNET India and Shri D. K. Kalra, Dr. Santosh K. Pandey and Ms. Meenakshi Agarwal from DeitY also participated in the meeting.

2. Shri Dipak Singh welcomed the members and gave a brief idea about the policy on universal electronic accessibility and requested Dr. Ajay Kumar to chair the meeting.

3. The Chairman started the meeting with thanks to all the members, who put in their earnest efforts in drafting the policy. He further stated that the objective of this meeting is to decide an action plan in which intent is to be converted into action. He informed that ERNET India had done some search on available tools for various kinds of disabilities. He put these tools in three broad categories:

- The first category in which tools are readily available and can be rolled-out immediately;
- The second category in which tools are in advance stage of development/research stage and which can be brought to conclusion and rolled out; and
- The third category where tools are to be developed as per requirement.

He requested ERNET India to give a presentation on the same.

4. Ms. Tejal Tiwari made a detailed presentation on the policy and major issues of disabled. She further presented various tools offered by different companies in all the aforementioned categories along with freeware and open source. In addition, she also presented outcome of the project implemented by ERNET for differently abled students.

5. Comments from the participants were invited by the Chairman and those are summarized below:

- Dr. Neena Pahuja informed the members that this list is not complete; other tools may also be added in the list.
- Ms. Shilpi Kapoor stated that there are a lot of tools, which are available in the market but a single tool may not be useful for all persons. The requirements of disabled vary from person to person and tools may be offered keeping in view their specific requirements. Therefore, a detailed study is required with the help of practical rehabilitation centers to assess the impact of the tools before roll-out.
- Dr. Govind, was of the opinion that definitely, there are variations in terms of demand but we have to start somewhere.
- Shri Sunil Abraham highlighted text-to-speech tools especially SAFA and e-Speak. He further recommended OCR, which is useful for digitization and discussed the issue of accessibility of websites. He also discussed a case study of audit of websites and argued to use digital signatures at least in DeitY.
- Shri Deepak Maheshwari informed that there should be mechanism for differently abled persons to explore the opportunities and asked to organize workshops for the same. He was of the opinion that like security and privacy policy, accessibility policy of the websites should also be made mandatory.
- Shri Lokesh Joshi told that unless accessibility policy is made mandatory; it will not be implemented in most of the organizations. He further shared that NIC has accomplished such study earlier and asked the organizations to comply with the same but nothing fruitful could be achieved.
- Shri Anjan Das suggested how private sector can play a big role for the same and asked to make a balance between old and new technologies. He also spoke about TIGHT project of DST.
- Shri S. K. Mahto shared various schemes of the Ministry for funding of various projects for disabled. He also informed about different subsidy schemes for procurement of software tools and assistive technology. Afterwards, he stated that Disability Act is going to be revised very soon and there is provision in the Act for accessibility which can make the accessibility policy mandatory for all the websites.

6. After comments from participants, discussion was held on further action and the following items for action were decided:

- (i) A sub-committee consisting of the following members was formed to prepare a detailed report on available text to speech tools for smart phones/tablets within a time frame of one month and giving its specific recommendations:
  - Shri Sunil Abraham, Centre for Internet & Society, Bangalore - Convener
  - Ms. Shilpi Kapoor, Barrier Break Technology, Mumbai

- Shri Hemant Darbari/Shri Mahesh Kulkarni, CDAC, Pune
  - Shri Pankaj Mohindroo, Indian Cellular Association (ICA), New Delhi
- (ii) A letter may be sent from the Secretary, DeitY to fifty most visited/popular websites of government of India for complying with accessibility policy. Ms Shilpi Kapoor will provide the list of 50 such sites.
- (iii) ERNET India may be appointed as a Nodal Agency to check accessibility compliance of government websites. In addition, ERNET India may also submit a detailed proposal to get grant-in-aid from Department of Disability Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for migrating non-compliant sites to accessibility compliant sites.
- (iv) The content at DeitY website may also be made accessible for persons of disabled categories.
- (v) In future meetings, representatives of the Department of School Education, MHRD and CDAC may also be invited.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.