Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)

Ref.: Circular BDT/DKS/DIS/030 Geneva, 30 October 2026

To:
- Administration of ITU Member States
- State of Palestine (Resolution 99)

Subject: Call for project ideas for the Regional Initiative Accelerator –innovation thematic focus

Dear Sir/Madam,

As you recall, one of the key outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25) held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2025, was the recognition, articulated in RESOLUTION 17 (Rev. Baku, 2025) "*Resource mobilization, implementation and cooperation for approved regional initiatives*" and RESOLUTION 92 (Baku, 2025) "*Strengthening the role of ITU regional offices in accelerating digital transformation and leveraging partnerships*", of the need for mechanisms and frameworks to enable the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to accelerate the development of projects in support of the Regional Initiatives for 2026-2029, adopted by the Conference.

To deliver on this mandate, I am pleased to announce the launch of the **Regional Initiative Accelerator (RIA)**, a methodology designed to support the implementation of the Regional Initiatives through actionable and bankable projects co-designed with ITU membership. In this context and as a first call, I invite your Administration to submit project proposals aligned with the identified Regional Initiatives on innovation.

The project ideas should be submitted to my team at bdtinnovation@itu.int, using the application form attached to this letter, by **15 November 2026**. Submissions should clearly define a problem linked to an expected outcome of one of the Regional Initiatives on innovation, demonstrate an initial commitment to advancing the proposed idea, and identify the resources and stakeholders needed for successful implementation.

Project ideas will be selected by a team of BDT staff, including experts from ITU Headquarters and the field. Selected project proposals will be notified within one week of the submission deadline. The focal point is: Mr Mohamed Ba with the email: Mohamed.Ba@itu.int, copy:bdtinnovation@itu.int. He is at your disposal to answer any questions and provide further information.

I look forward to your active participation in this first Regional Initiative Accelerator for project identification that will pave way for the co-designing of impactful projects.

For further details please refer to the Annexes accompanying this letter and visit the Regional Initiative Accelerator website at:

https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Innovation/Pages/RIA/Regional-Initiative-Accelerator.aspx

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava
Director

Annex I - Regional Initiative Accelerator Concept
Annex II - Selected Regional Initiatives related to Innovation
Annex III - Project Idea Submission Form

Annex I - Regional Initiative Accelerator Concept

Background

Since 2024, with support from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) China Collaboration Fund, the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau has been working on new approaches to supporting the development of Regional Initiatives.

The need for new frameworks was reiterated at WTDC-25, namely through resolution 17 (Rev. Baku, 2025) on resource mobilization, implementation and cooperation for approved Regional Initiatives, and resolution 92 (Baku, 2025) on strengthening the role of ITU regional offices in accelerating digital transformation.

The ITU Regional Initiatives Accelerator (RIA) aims to boost digital development projects by creating an accelerator for WTDC approved Regional Initiatives. The Accelerator will help design and implement projects in the realization of regional initiatives adopted at WTDC-25, benefiting ITU Member States, especially developing countries.

This RIA provides a guided, collaborative mechanism for stakeholders to identify emerging trends, develop bankable projects that are fit for the future, and mobilize the partnerships and resources needed for their effective implementation. At its core, the RIA serves as a platform that brings key stakeholders together to realize the Regional Initiatives, assess ecosystem opportunities, and co-design implementation-ready project concepts with clear outputs and pathways to deliver impact and sustainability.

Methodology

The methodology integrates collaborative methods, innovation approaches, practical tools and core competencies into one coherent process. It supports users in exploring complex challenges, defining priorities, designing solutions, testing assumptions, and preparing projects for mobilisation. Throughout the journey, it clarifies expected results, ownership structures, and resource needs, while encouraging collaboration across stakeholders.

The ITU methodology comprises three key phases:

- Phase 1 – Trend Research, Readiness and Foresight: Establishes a forward-looking understanding of the regional context by scanning signals and trends, mapping drivers of change, and exploring future scenarios. This builds a shared vision of the desired future and the strategic direction needed to achieve it.
- Phase 2 – Bankable Project Development: Translates the future vision into structured, investable project blueprints by defining objectives, identifying root causes, shaping solution pathways, and testing assumptions. The phase produces evidence-based concepts with clear outputs and measurable outcomes, documented in a project brief and implementation tracker.
- Phase 3 – Resource Mobilization and Partnerships: Moves projects from design to delivery by establishing partnership models, aligning roles and incentives, and defining resource mobilization pathways. The phase produces an investment tracker to help secure funding and transform validated project blueprints into viable, implementation-ready projects.

Across these three phases, the methodology integrates desktop research, expert insights, targeted innovation tools, co-creation with ecosystem stakeholders, and core competencies to guide decision-making, strengthen project logic, and increase the likelihood of sustained delivery.

Together, these elements form a coherent framework that helps regions move from strategic intent to actionable, future-ready projects with confidence and clarity.

Terms and conditions

Submissions are subject to the following terms and conditions:

- One member of each selected project team will be invited to an in-person co-design workshop described in this Annex.
- A maximum of two project ideas may be selected per Regional Initiative listed in Annex II, subject to meeting the selection criteria.
- To ensure equitable participation, only one project idea will be selected per country.
- Each co-design workshop will host up to 10 countries.
- Submissions must be in English, which will also be the working language of the co-design workshop.
- Sponsorship to attend the workshop depends on available funds, with priority for participants from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
- Organizations that can self-fund their teams will be given special consideration for the in-person co-design workshop.
- Core teams of selected project ideas will be invited to take online training on the RIA methodology via the ITU Academy.
- The selection process will ensure a rigorous evaluation and allow the relevant ITU regional offices to keep supporting selected projects after the co-design workshop.
- Project ideas onboarded to the RIA are expected to deliver a project brief and the other outputs defined in the RIA mechanism.
- In 2027, core teams will receive additional in-kind support for resource mobilization and implementation planning to help turn their ideas into global projects.

Evaluation Criteria

Project ideas will be evaluated against the following criteria, each carrying equal weight (100% in total):

- Originality: The concept is original for its context and responds to the challenge.
- Relevance: The idea is relevant to, and distinctive within, the targeted Regional Initiative.
- Sustainability: The means, methods and resources needed to sustain key activities are clearly described.
- Viability: The proposed solutions are realistic and logically sound.
- Impact: The proposal addresses cross-cutting problems, solutions and impacts at national, regional and global levels.
- Stakeholder engagement: Relevant ecosystem stakeholders and their potential contributions to the project are clearly identified.

Co-design workshop

Each selected project ideas will be invited to attend one co-design workshops, with support by the project sponsor, MIIT, and the event hosts: the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) and Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi).

Projects ideas will be assigned to a workshop according to their region:

- Participants from the Arab States, Europe and Africa regions of ITU will be invited to a workshop in Lilongwe, **Malawi, from 2 to 4 December 2026**.
- Participants from the Americas, Commonwealth of Independent States, and Asia and the Pacific regions of ITU will be invited to a workshop in Jakarta, **Indonesia, from 8 to 10 December 2026**.

Selected project teams will receive full details of the workshop in due course.

The tentative agenda for the three-day co-design workshop is shared below.

1. Welcome and opening remarks
2. Round of introductions
3. Expert insights
4. Introduction to the ITU Regional Initiatives RIA methodology
5. Introduction to RIA methodology and capacity building
6. Co-creation session: Phase I – Trend research readiness and foresight
7. Co-creation session: Phase II – Bankable project development
8. Co-creation session: Phase III – Partnerships and resource mobilisation
9. Outcomes and reflections
10. Next steps

Annex II- Selected Regional Initiatives related to Innovation

For details on the expected outcomes and impact of each Regional Initiative, please consult the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025 (WTDC-25): Final Report

Regional Initiative	**Objective**
AFR4: Development of digital applications, micro, small and medium enterprises and digital innovation ecosystems	To foster an enabling digital innovation ecosystem that can navigate technological revolutions, and establish a sustainable, conducive environment for the utilization of emerging technologies and the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and startups
AFR5: Sustainable funding mechanisms for Africa's digital transformation	To establish a sustainable financing mechanism to support the implementation of the African regional initiatives and to accelerate the digital transformation process in Africa through the mobilization of diverse funding sources and through attraction of long-term investment in digital infrastructure and emerging technologies.
AMS3: Support for innovative digital ecosystems and the adoption and use of emerging technologies	To promote digital capacity development, digital government systems, local e-services and innovation ecosystems necessary for sustainable and inclusive digital transformation, innovation and entrepreneurship.
ARB4: Innovation ecosystems to support the adoption and growth of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence	To establish a comprehensive strategy that fosters the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital innovation ecosystems across the Arab States region, capable of navigating technical revolutions, establishing a sustainable environment fostering the use of emerging technologies, supporting the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises and startups, driving economic growth and building resilience against technological advancements and contributing significantly to the socio economic development of the region
ASP4: Enabling an innovative and sustainable telecommunication/ information and communication technology sector	To assist Member States in developing appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks that foster innovation, investment and sustainability across the telecommunications/information and communication technology (ICT) mEM, by way of enabling ICT-centric innovation and the growth of startups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), while also addressing the need for sustainability.
CIS4: Enabling environment and telecommunication/information and communication technology regulation	The need to bridge the digital divide in terms of affordability and the continuing emergence of new telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) systems and networks necessitate the timely evolution of digital regulation and the formulation of digital development strategies, both in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and at the level of the entire region.
EUR5: Digital innovation ecosystems	To foster environments that are conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship through systemic approaches based on digital telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs), aimed at closing the growing digital innovation divide in the region.

Annex III – Project Idea Submission Form

One submission per organization. Submit to bdtinnovation@itu.int by 15 November 2026.

Questions	Responses
Basic information	
Country and Region	
Organisation	
Focal point (FP) for coordination	
Email address of FP	
Core team members	
Project / idea	
What is the working title of your project or idea?	
What have you done to validate this project idea?	
Which ITU Regional Initiative on innovation does the project link to, and which of its expected outcomes will it contribute to (please refer to the list in Annex II)?	
Which strategy or vision does the project idea support, and what outcomes do you expect it to contribute?	
What problem are you trying to solve? (the challenge, who it affects, and how)	
What national and global uncertainties make solving this problem urgent?	
What national and global signals and trends make this problem urgent?	
How will you solve the problem, and who needs to be involved?	
What existing opportunities around you can you leverage to address this problem?	

What outputs do you expect to deliver through this solution?	
What outcomes do you expect to achieve through this solution?	
Sustainability and impact	
What capabilities do you already have to support the solution and its implementation?	
What financial resources and commitments do you already have allocated to support this solution and its implementation?	
What non-financial resources and commitments do you already have allocated to support this solution and its implementation?	
What impact do you expect, and how will you sustain it beyond the project?	
Which partners do you need, and what role would each play?	
Contribution to the RIA project	
Will you sponsor your core team's participation in the in-person co-design workshop? (Selected project will receive one team member sponsorship, but additional members can be brought at the project idea submitter own cost, subject to capacity of workshop arrangement)	
Which experts from your country, relevant to your topic, can be involved in this RIA engagement?	