Chair, RDF-CIS

Final Report of ITU Regional Development Forum for the Commonwealth of Independent States (RDF-CIS)

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ITU Regional Development Forum for the Commonwealth

of Independent States (RDF-CIS) 2025

Information and Communication Technologies for attaining
Sustainable Development Goals

Organized by the International Telecommunication Union with the support
of the Ministry of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies of the Kyrgyz Republic

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Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction & General Overview

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Commonwealth of Independent States (RDF-CIS) 2025, organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the ITU, took place on 23 April 2025, in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. The event was hosted by the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic and preceded the ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Commonwealth of Independent States (RPM-CIS) on 24-25 April 2025.

The RDF-CIS facilitated high-level dialogue and collaboration among telecommunications/ICTs policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, academia, and development organizations. It was crucial in setting strategic priorities for the BDT's regional work plan between World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDCs).

The forum allowed ITU and its stakeholders, including Member States and Sector Members, to exchange views on achieving meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in CIS region.

2. **Documentation**

The agenda, programme, and Forum documents are published on the [RDF-CIS website](#).

3. Participation

The event was attended by a total of 75 participants (30 female and 45 male), including 67 (89%) attending in person and 8 (11%) participating remotely. 12 Member States (including non-CIS Member States) were represented by 38 delegates, along with participants from various stakeholder groups, 4 from ITU-D Sector Members, 3 from Academia, 2 from other UN Agencies, 2 from Regional Organizations and 15 from non ITU members. The final list of participants is available [here](#).

4. Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony of the ITU's RDF-CIS began with remarks from dignitaries, highlighting the importance of digital transformation, innovation, and regional cooperation in promoting sustainable development. The opening remarks were given by the following speakers:

- **H.E. Mr. Azamat Zhamangulov,** Minister of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies of the Kyrgyz Republic
- **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava,** Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau
- **Mr. Alexey Borodin,** Director General, Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC)

The forum was officially inaugurated by **H.E. Azamat Zhamangulov**, Minister of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies of the Kyrgyz Republic, who expressed optimism regarding fruitful discussions and future regional cooperation. Minister Zhamangulov welcomed the delegates, particularly noting the improved weather conditions in Bishkek, and highlighted his anticipation for productive exchanges on digital transformation initiatives within Kyrgyzstan and the broader CIS region.

Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), delivered opening remarks in which he acknowledged the forum's significance, especially as the CIS region prepares to host the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) for the

first time. He praised CIS region's achievements, notably its attainment of gender parity, and commended Kyrgyzstan's advanced regulatory status.

Dr. Zavazava emphasized ITU's commitment to innovation and sustainable digital transformation, reinforcing its strategic goals of achieving meaningful, universal, and affordable connectivity and driving sustainable digital growth aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He underscored the importance of equitable connectivity, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and bridging the digital divide, particularly highlighting the challenges faced by landlocked countries like Kyrgyzstan.

Dr. Zavazava also announced the launch of the State of Digital Development and Trends in the CIS Region: Challenges and Opportunities report and reiterated ITU's accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to member states, academia, industry, and private sector participants. Additionally, he mentioned the Partner2Connect coalition, noting substantial pledges aimed at fostering digital connectivity but cautioned the importance of converting pledges into tangible outcomes. He expressed ITU's readiness to facilitate productive collaborations and to continue addressing digital disparities and promoting equitable digital access and transformation.

Mr. Alexey Borodin, Director General of the Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC), reinforced the forum's significance as the RCC approaches its 35th anniversary. He recognized the upcoming WTDC in Baku, Azerbaijan, as a milestone for the region. Mr. Borodin called for open, transparent, and solution-oriented discussions aimed at addressing digitalization challenges and identifying regional priorities and initiatives. He commended the thorough preparatory work conducted by the ITU Regional Office for CIS region and expressed confidence in achieving productive outcomes during the forum.

The opening session set a collaborative and forward-looking tone for the forum, reinforcing the critical role of multilateral cooperation, public-private partnerships, and digital transformation in driving sustainable development across CIS region. Participants were urged to actively engage in the discussions ahead, working towards a digital future that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

5. Appointment of the Chair of the Regional Development Forum

At the end of the opening session **H.E. Mr. Azamat Zhamangulov, Minister of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies of the Kyrgyz Republic,** was appointed by acclamation as the Chair of the RDF for CIS Region.

6. Roundtable Discussions

6.1. ROUNDTABLE ONE: Digital transformation and development in the CIS: trends, opportunities, challenges:

09:30 – 10:30	**Moderator**: Mr. Alexey Borodin, Director General, Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC)
	Setting the Context: Presentation by ITU
	Panelists: — H.E. Mr. Azamat Zhamangulov, Minister of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies of the Kyrgyz Republic — Mr. Damir Seysembekov, Chair of the Telecommunication Committee, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan

	− Mr. Hakim Ismoilzod, First Deputy Director, Agency of Innovation and Digital Technologies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The first RDF-CIS roundtable discussed digital development trends, challenges, and opportunities in the region, focusing on digital transformation and development.

The session started with a presentation made by the BDT, highlighting the main points of the "State of Digital Development and Trends in the CIS Region: Challenges and Opportunities" report (report can be accessed through this link).

This presentation introduced a recent status report intended to support CIS countries for their policy-making and strategic planning, particularly in preparation for WTDC-25. ITU emphasized the importance of Universal and Meaningful Connectivity (UMC), defined as enabling safe, productive, and enriching online experiences at an affordable cost. According to ITU's findings, the CIS region demonstrated significant achievements, notably reaching a 92% internet penetration rate in 2024— the highest among ITU regions—and successfully attaining gender parity online, with 93% of men and 91% of women connected.

Other notable points from the ITU presentation included widespread adoption and affordability of mobile broadband and increased access to fiber infrastructure, which covers approximately 93% of the regional population within a 100-kilometer radius. Nevertheless, ITU also acknowledged the existence of notable challenges, including persistent digital divides within the region, particularly impacting rural communities, where 7% of the population remains without any internet access. Moreover, ITU highlighted that seven of the nine CIS countries are landlocked, complicating infrastructure deployment and elevating connectivity costs. The presentation also identified significant variations in regulatory maturity among CIS countries. Consequently, ITU underscored the necessity of strengthening regulatory frameworks and harmonizing policies across the CIS region.

Additionally, ITU drew attention to disparities in cybersecurity preparedness, noting that the region scored 67 out of 100 in the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI), slightly above the global average but displaying significant internal differences. The presentation briefly described case studies from Armenia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and CIS-wide initiatives, demonstrating the region's potential for innovation and engagement in areas such as digital entrepreneurship and cybersecurity preparedness.

The presentation concluded with targeted actions required for progress towards UMC (e.g., expanding infrastructure and affordability gaps, strengthening ICT regulation and digital governance to unlock investment and innovation, improving statistical capacity, and enhancing regional collaboration) and the risks hindering the further progress (e.g., regulatory fragmentation, weak institutional capacity and cybersecurity capabilities, limited digital skills, and lack of reliable data).

The roundtable discussions provided important insights and perspectives as presented by the panelists. The main highlights of the discussions included:

− Panelists emphasized significant progress in digital infrastructure and connectivity across the CIS region, mentioning initiatives such as Kyrgyzstan's "Digital CASA" project, which provided internet connectivity to remote schools and hospitals and established the national G-Cloud infrastructure. Kazakhstan highlighted its extensive broadband expansion, including the "Accessible Internet" national project and the Caspian Sea fiber optic cable initiative with Azerbaijan, aiming for enhanced connectivity throughout the region.

– Panelists advocated regional cooperation, mentioning specific transboundary initiatives like the joint electricity and digital infrastructure project between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, initially developed for energy transmission but expanded to include digital connectivity. Uzbekistan specifically recommended creating a unified regional digital marketplace by consolidating IT hubs and parks to attract global technology companies.

– Panelists also highlighted the critical importance of enhancing human capital through digital skills and education. Kazakhstan, for example, mentioned establishing 20 regional IT hubs dedicated to digital literacy and innovation across various sectors, including agriculture and mining. Uzbekistan similarly emphasized expanding educational initiatives to foster IT talent capable of competing internationally.

– Panelists encouraged the ITU and regional organizations, including the RCC, to further facilitate regulatory harmonization and cooperation. They cited ongoing bilateral partnerships, such as Uzbekistan's collaboration with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, as successful examples of regional digital cooperation, and underscored the potential for broader unified regulatory and technological initiatives to accelerate socio-economic development across the CIS region.

– Representative of Uzbekistan spoke about the achievements of digital development in the country, paying special attention to the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence, the development of broadband infrastructure, the government's efforts to increase the export of IT services, the development of e-government services and other areas of work.

Discussions highlighted the need for sustained investment and policy alignment and strengthened multilateral partnerships to bridge connectivity gaps. Digital technologies continue to play a critical role in economic and social development across the CIS region.

6.2. ROUNDTABLE TWO: P2C Matchmaking - Fostering partnership building to accelerate connectivity infrastructure and digital development

	Moderator: Mr. Orozobek Kaiykov, Advisor to the Chairman of the Service for Regulation and Supervision in the Communications Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic
	Setting the Context: Presentation by ITU
11:00 – 13:00	**Panelists**: – Mr. Jeyhun Huseynzade, Deputy Chairman, Information Communication Technologies Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Mr. Kazbek Togolokov, Director "Digital CASAKR", Kyrgyzstan – Mr. Zhoomart Ordobaev, Integrated Solutions Manager, ZTE – Mr. Dmitry Korzun, Head of the Telecommunications and Radio Frequency Spectrum Regulation Department, Ministry of Communications and Informatization of the Republic of Belarus – Mr. Tair Ismailov, Strategic Engagement Director, GSMA – Ms. Kristine Gyonjyan, Director, Union of Operators, Armenia – Mr. Rodion Immel, Regulatory Matters and Liaison Manager, Technical Department, Intersputnik

The second roundtable commenced with remarks emphasizing the critical importance of infrastructure as the fundamental basis for inclusive digital transformation, accessibility, and development. Moderated by Mr. Orozobek Kaiykov, the session focused on facilitating partnerships

and networking to expedite communications infrastructure and digital development within the CIS region.

The session continued with a presentation by ITU highlighting its Partner2Connect (P2C) initiative, a strategic effort aimed at bridging the global digital divide and supporting the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals through meaningful connectivity. The presentation emphasized that despite significant global progress, approximately 2.6 billion people worldwide remain offline. To address this challenge and address the gap in global digital inclusion, the P2C initiative has outlined a structured "Action Framework," focusing on four key pillars: Access, Adoption, Value Creation, and Acceleration of Investments. These pillars collectively promote affordable, accessible and secure connectivity, digital skill enhancement, sustainable digital ecosystems, and robust ICT sector investments to promote Universal Meaningful Connectivity (UMC).

ITU's presentation further detailed various pledge categories encouraged under P2C, including financial, policy-oriented, advocacy-based, and programmatic commitments, noting the significant engagement from stakeholders within the CIS region, evidenced by 60 pledges totaling $4.4 billion involving 43 entities. Strategic regional priorities were identified, such as comprehensive broadband deployment, effective spectrum management, satellite connectivity enhancement, and targeted digital transformation projects. Additionally, upcoming strategic initiatives, including a spectrum management guide, connectivity planning platform, and increased investment in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing, were emphasized as vital components of ITU's approach to ensuring comprehensive and equitable digital connectivity across the region. ITU concluded by reiterating the essential role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving sustained digital transformation in the CIS region.

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion. The main highlights of the discussions are as follows:

− Panelists emphasized the critical role of digital infrastructure as fundamental to achieving inclusive digital transformation, particularly highlighting the importance of accessibility for people with disabilities and underserved communities.

− Several speakers emphasized that connectivity must be designed to serve all individuals, including people with disabilities and those living in remote or underserved areas. This emphasis on equity highlights the role of digital infrastructure not only as a technological necessity but also as a human right.

− National digital strategies are showing significant results across the region. Azerbaijan, for example, has made rapid progress since 2021 with its "Online Azerbaijan" initiative, developing policy and legal frameworks while expanding broadband infrastructure to remote regions. Similarly, Kyrgyzstan has advanced the "Digital CASA-Kyrgyz Republic" project, incorporating infrastructure expansion, cloud systems, and institutional digital training programs.

− It was emphasized that public investment plays a critical role in filling market gaps. Private telecom operators are often reluctant to invest in rural or less profitable areas. As a result, governments have stepped in to fund and lead infrastructure development in these regions. This approach ensures that connectivity is not limited by commercial viability but aligned with national development priorities.

− The mobile communications sector emerged as a major economic driver in the region. Representatives from GSMA noted that mobile technologies now account for a significant portion of GDP in many countries. National strategies that incentivize operators—such as

offering discounted spectrum licenses for those expanding to rural areas—are helping to reduce digital inequality.

− Beyond physical infrastructure, digital literacy is essential for effective digital inclusion. Many governments are not only building networks but also investing in digital skills programs. Projects like Azerbaijan's national digital literacy survey demonstrate a comprehensive approach to building digital ecosystems.

− Public-private partnerships were frequently cited as a key success factor. Armenia's collaboration with ITU and local telecom companies to connect rural villages, as well as conduct entrepreneurship training for them exemplifies how effective partnerships can generate both infrastructure and social development benefits, especially for women and small businesses.

− Satellite technologies, especially low-earth orbit (LEO) networks, were recognized as increasingly vital to bridging connectivity gaps in mountainous or isolated regions. Intersputnik and other stakeholders stressed the importance of hybrid models that combine terrestrial and satellite communications to ensure reliable coverage everywhere.

− Efficient spectrum management remains a regional priority. Belarus, for example, has launched initiatives to improve the availability and coordination of spectrum resources, including a presidential decree mandating reinvestment of operator revenue into infrastructure development. The rollout of new base stations and preparation for 5G were highlighted as key milestones.

− Finally, the importance of sustainable and localized approaches was underlined. From building AI models in national languages to tailoring training for public servants and households, participants agreed that digital transformation must be both scalable and culturally relevant to succeed in the long term.

In conclusion, the roundtable reinforced the importance of public-private partnerships, regulatory collaboration, and technological innovation in achieving universal and meaningful connectivity. Sustained investment, policy alignment, and cross-sector engagement are critical to bridging the digital divide. The session ended with a call to action for stakeholders to foster further collaboration, exchange best practices, and explore new financing mechanisms to accelerate digital transformation in the CIS region.

6.3. ROUNDTABLE THREE: P2C Matchmaking - Fostering Digital Alliances and Cooperation

	Moderator: ITU Regional Office for CIS
14:00 – 15:30	**Panelists**: − Mr. Bakhtiyar Mammadov, Deputy Head of Administration of the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan − Mr. Dauren Rakhimzhanov, Managing Director of the Digital Initiatives Directorate, Eurasian Development Bank − Ms. Zura Kamzinova, Project Manager, International Cooperation Department, National Information Technologies JSC, Kazakhstan − Mr. Irakli Kashibadze, CEO, Future Laboratory, Georgia − Ms. Aisuluu Mustapakulova, Head of Innovations and Strategic Development Department, State Agency of Intellectual Property and Innovations under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic

	− Mr. Talant Sultanov, Advisor, Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP); Co-founder, Internet Society Kyrgyzstan Chapter (ISOC)
	− Ms. Tatiana Kuznetsova, Head Chief of Division of Statistics of Foreign Economic Activity, Transport and Communications, Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS
	− Mr. Aleksei Savrasov, Industrial Development Officer of Digital Transformation and AI, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

The third roundtable session emphasized the power of regional partnerships to drive inclusive digital transformation, innovation ecosystems, and diversified economic development across the CIS region. The discussions brought together government leaders, development banks, innovation experts, and international organizations who presented a range of frameworks, projects, and initiatives aimed at accelerating progress toward a digital future. Key highlights from the presentations made during this session can be summarized as follows:

− Azerbaijan reaffirmed its commitment to innovation by announcing the establishment of a regional acceleration center aligned with the ITU's Kigali Action Plan. Designed to serve not just Azerbaijan but also the broader region, the center will become operational in November 2025 and is expected to act as a key hub in fostering digital transformation and startup growth across the CIS. This initiative complements Azerbaijan's long-term goal of transitioning from a resource-based to an innovation-led economy.

− The Eurasian Development Bank underscored its role as a critical enabler of innovation, offering grants and financial tools for digital projects in areas such as smart cities, artificial intelligence, and food security. It reiterated its readiness to co-finance new initiatives and build deeper partnerships with national institutions and the ITU.

− Kazakhstan highlighted its strong e-government infrastructure, noting that its digital transformation is supported by over 400 integrated databases and increasing interoperability with international digital systems. Officials called for regional collaboration through shared digital platforms, open APIs, and best-practice exchanges to amplify the impact of local innovations.

− Kyrgyzstan's national intellectual property agency presented a robust multi-tier approach to innovation. From early education robotics labs to university-based incubators and national grant programs, Kyrgyzstan is systematically building an ecosystem for creative and technological advancement. International partners have supported these efforts, and over 100 startup projects have already received funding.

− Community-based digital inclusion was highlighted through initiatives in rural Kyrgyzstan, including community networks, localized educational content, and Internet safety training. These projects have not only bridged the gender and regional digital divides but have also leveraged digital tools for climate monitoring and healthcare accessibility.

− The CIS Statistical Committee provided an update on its efforts to harmonize ICT data collection across the region. The development of multilingual dashboards, integrated statistical platforms, and regional indicator systems is enabling more robust, accessible, and comparative data analysis for policymakers.

− UNIDO presented its digital industrial transformation model and outlined a series of regional initiatives, including innovation hubs and smart manufacturing pilots. With projects already underway in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, UNIDO invited broader

regional participation and collaboration, aiming to convert digital connectivity into sustainable industrial growth.
— Representative of the Russian Federation gave a brief overview of the digital development in the country, outlining priority areas in terms of the development of the digital economy, ICT infrastructure, digital skills and comprehensive cooperation between interested organizations both at the national and international levels.

The roundtable underscored that achieving truly transformative digital development in the CIS region requires far more than isolated national efforts—it demands a cohesive, region-wide ecosystem in which governments, financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and international bodies work in concert. By aligning strategic policy frameworks with adaptive financing models, interoperable platforms and tailored capacity-building, countries can close connectivity gaps, cultivate innovation pipelines, and drive resilient and inclusive growth. Crucially, data-driven decision-making and shared learning reinforce this collaborative architecture, ensuring that progress is measurable, scalable, and responsive to local needs. In this way, the CIS region can harness its collective strengths to build a digital future that delivers sustainable economic prosperity and social well-being for all.

6.4. ROUNDTABLE FOUR: ITU Regional Initiatives for CIS Region

	Moderator: ITU Regional Office for CIS
16:00 – 17:30	Panelists: — Ms. Anara Bekenova, Head, Radio Frequency Spectrum Planning and International Coordination Department, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan — Ms. Lilit Khachikyan, Cyber Project Coordination Manager, Information Systems Agency of Armenia — Ms. Timur Derbishaliev, Cybersecurity Consultant, Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic — Mr. Jeyhun Huseynzade, Deputy Chairman, Information Communication Technologies Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan — Ms. Aliya Almatova, Lead Manager of International Relations, NITEC, Kazakhstan — Mr. Vahe Arzumanyan, Expert in screen access and digital accessibility programs, teacher of information and communication technologies at the computer center of the S. Shahnazaryan House of Culture of the Union of the Blind, Armenia — Ms. Zhanat Jabassova, Head of the Center for International Cooperation and Project Implementation, Kostanay Engineering and Economic University named after M. Dulatov, Kazakhstan — Mr. Nazarbek Dzhunusaliev, Project Implementation Department Manager Kyrgyz State Technical University, Kyrgyzstan — Mr. Vladimir Ivashko, Head of the Scientific and Technical Department of the Belarusian State Academy of Communications, Belarus

The session focused on the implementation of the Regional Initiatives for CIS region as adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 (WTDC-22) which are:

- RI CIS1: "Developing infrastructure to promote innovation and partnerships in the introduction of new technologies – the Internet of Things, including the industrial Internet, smart cities and communities, 5G/IMT-2020, and next-generation NET-2030 communication networks, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, digital health, digital skills and environmental protection".
- RI CIS2: "Cybersecurity and personal data protection".
- RI CIS3: "Creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment to accelerate digital transformation".
- RI CIS4: "Digital skills and information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility for the public, in particular for persons with disabilities".
- RI CIS5: "Development of smart cities and communities".

The main highlights of the discussions included:

- The fourth roundtable session advanced a comprehensive review of regional initiatives across five priority areas. Speakers from Member States and sector members detailed both national achievements and collaborative steps toward bridging the digital divide and reinforcing the region's technology ecosystem.
- The discussion on Infrastructure, Connectivity, and Innovation highlighted Kazakhstan's strategy for extending high-capacity networks nationwide. The Kazakh delegation reported that an auction of 3.5 GHz spectrum in 2022 paved the way for rapid 5G deployment, while ITU-supported training sessions have helped regulator and operators accelerate roll-out. Universal school connectivity was cited as a flagship objective that connected many schools, giving the country a leading position within the region.
- Under Cybersecurity and Data Protection, Armenia outlined a multidimensional reform that created a dedicated information-systems agency and established a national CERT. With direct assistance from the ITU, the country staged its first nationwide cyber-drill in December 2024, stress-testing incident-response procedures and fostering trust between public, private and academic stakeholders. Plans are under way to repeat the exercise annually and to finalize the first national cybersecurity law.
- Kyrgyzstan reported on an ITU/World Bank project that deploys "honeypot" sensors to gather threat intelligence for a forthcoming national incident-response centre, while acknowledging the continuing need for skilled analysts and clear data-sharing protocols.
- The segment on Regulatory Reform focused on creating market conditions that promote affordable, and high-quality access. Azerbaijan described a competition-centered regulatory model that has more than doubled the number of Internet-service providers to 170; the approach will be codified in a new electronic-communications law expected later this year.
- A state technology enterprise from Kazakhstan announced a regional declaration — signed at the RDF-CIS 2024 — intended to fast-track digital-government solutions in cooperation with the ITU.
- For Digital Skills and Accessibility, several education-oriented projects were showcased. Armenia presented an ITU-equipped Internet center for the blind, recently modernized with

updated computers, screen-reader software and a sound studio that now produces training podcasts. Future goals include localizing open-source screen-reader software in Armenian and expanding vocational courses for visually impaired users. Kostanay Engineering University of Kazakhstan reported on a "smart-ecosystem" project that links higher-education laboratories with local schools and industry; its recent national AI challenge attracted participants from twenty universities.

− Kyrgyzstan's leading technical university announced the creation of a 5 G laboratory and an academic cyber-security center to meet rising demand for specialized talent

− Discussions on Smart Cities and Communities centered on the need to extend digital transformation beyond capital regions. Belarus described a newly established Smart City Research Center that houses six specialized laboratories. Supported by the ITU, the institute has delivered a series of regional workshops for local government officials, utilities and businesses, helping them adopt practical digital-service solutions and build local capacity

Throughout the session, presenters emphasized that sustainable, inclusive digital transformation in the CIS hinges on multi stakeholder collaboration—linking government policy, financial incentives, technical standards, and human capacity development to deliver measurable, scalable impact in the lead up to WTDC-25.

7   Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony of the RDF-CIS was marked by reflections on the significant outcomes achieved throughout the event.

The closing ceremony commenced with the remarks by H.E. Mr. Azamat Zhamangulov, Minister of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, as the Chair of RPM-CIS. He expressed his appreciation to the participants who had remained until the end of the day and praised the high caliber of the presentations delivered throughout the meeting. He observed that every delegation had demonstrated its readiness to align national efforts with a common regional policy on communications and digitalization under the ITU framework. Stressing that only a concerted approach would allow vital ICT services to reach remote and underserved communities, he expressed confidence that the practical solutions showcased during the day would help address pressing regional challenges. He thanked delegations for endorsing him as Chair and expressed his wish for equally productive meetings on the following days.

Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), then delivered his closing remarks on behalf of the Union. He commended the Forum for convening governments, industry and academia in a genuine multistakeholder dialogue. Addressing the private sector, he reframed perceived obstacles as promising investment opportunities and affirmed that a fair return on investment was both legitimate and essential for sustainable growth. Dr Zavazava underlined ITU's commitment to helping remote and rural populations integrate into the formal digital economy; and placed innovation and entrepreneurship at the heart of future development. Universal meaningful connectivity (UMC), he noted, must be underpinned by online safety, confidence, and trust. He encouraged delegates to engage actively in the forthcoming WTDC-related discussions and reminded them that ITU, as an international organization, stands ready to assist its members in reaching new heights of digital transformation.

In addition to his closing remarks, Dr. Zavazava presented a certificate of appreciation to H.E. Azamat Zhamangulov, Chair of the RDF-CIS, as a token of gratitude for his leadership throughout

the event. The certificate symbolized recognition of the Chair's effective leadership and his contribution to the success of the RDF-CIS's proceedings.

Representative of Tajikistan, Mr. Hakim Ismoilzod made a proposal to hold the RDF-CIS in 2026 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan. This proposal was gratefully supported by the forum participants.

As the forum came to a formal closure, the outcome report of RDF was announced, with the secretariat to publish the draft, which will be open for comments and observations in the following 10 days after its publication.

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