

Regional Regulatory Associations (RA)/Digital Regulation Network (DRN) Meeting

Global Symposium for Regulators 2026 (GSR-26)

Ankara, Türkiye, 13 May 2026



1. Background and objectives

The meeting of the Regional Regulatory Associations (RA) and the Digital Regulation Network (DRN) was convened in the framework of the Global Symposium for Regulators 2026 (GSR-26), as a closed session bringing together regional regulatory associations and their members. The meeting was organized by the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) and held on 13 May 2026. This year it counted with the participation of 15 Regional Regulatory Associations from around the world who shared their experiences and proposals related to DRN and GSR Best Practices Guidelines.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- ✓ take stock of progress under the ITU initiative on the Digital Regulation Network (DRN) as a collaborative “network of networks”;
- ✓ provide a platform for Regional Regulatory Associations to exchange experiences and perspectives on current regulatory priorities;
- ✓ reflect, in light of the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs) on regulatory governance essentials, on how regional and international cooperation can strengthen effectiveness in cross-border digital ecosystems.

2. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Mr Marko Mišmaš, Director of the Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia (AKOS) and Chair of the RA/DRN meeting, also serving as Chair of IRG and BEREC, followed by Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau.

In his remarks, the Chair underlined the strategic importance of the DRN as a collaborative platform enabling regulators and regional regulatory associations to share knowledge, align approaches, and address increasingly complex and interconnected regulatory challenges. He emphasized that regulation today must be forward-looking, inclusive, and cooperative, and that regional regulatory associations play a critical bridging role between national, regional, and global policy processes.

In his opening remarks, Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), emphasized the strategic importance of the Digital Regulation Network (DRN) as a practical mechanism for strengthening collaboration among regulators in an increasingly complex digital environment. He underscored that the DRN embodies a “network of networks” approach, enabling regional regulatory associations to share experiences, align regulatory perspectives, and collectively address emerging challenges that transcend national boundaries.

It was highlighted that effective digital regulation today requires cooperation, trust, and coordinated action, and reaffirmed ITU’s commitment to supporting Regional Regulatory Associations (RA) in advancing inclusive, sustainable, and forward-looking regulatory frameworks through the DRN.

3. Activities Digital Regulation Network (DRN)

BDT presented an update on the progress of the ITU initiative on the Digital Regulation Network (DRN). The presentation highlighted the evolution of the DRN as a “network of networks” designed to foster structured cooperation among regional regulatory associations and to strengthen regulatory capacity in a rapidly evolving digital environment.

Participants were informed about ongoing efforts to:

- deepen collaboration among RAs across regions;
- support more coherent and interoperable regulatory approaches;
- ensure that regulatory responses keep pace with innovation while contributing to inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

4. Discussion and interventions from Regional Regulatory Associations

The main part of the meeting was devoted to open discussion and interventions by Regional Regulatory Associations. In guiding the discussion, the Chair framed the exchange among

Regional Regulatory Associations as a practical, action-oriented dialogue, focused not on abstract principles but on what is working in practice at regional level, what requires further reinforcement, and what approaches could be replicated or scaled across regions through the Digital Regulation Network (DRN).

RAs shared experiences on their current priorities, activities, and challenges, including issues related to universal connectivity, investment, trust in digital services, cybersecurity, and governance of emerging technologies (Annex 1 collects all the activities reported by RAs). The discussion underscored that many of these challenges are inherently cross-border and cannot be effectively addressed through isolated national approaches.

The meeting registered several concrete developments. The BDT Director announced that the Association of Communications and Telecommunications Regulators of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (ARCTEL-CPLP) had formally expressed its interest in joining the Digital Regulation Network. This request was recognized as a positive development contributing to enhanced regional engagement and further strengthening cooperation within the DRN framework. The West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA) launched its 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and reported continued progress on the operationalization of the ECOWAS Free Roaming Initiative, on submarine cable resilience following the 2024 disruptions, and on its Digital Financial Services Lab in Ghana developed with the ITU. The Caribbean Telecommunication Union (CTU) reported on the establishment of an Implementation Committee to advance a collaborative regional regulatory body for Caribbean countries and on the launch of the Caribbean AI Task Force. The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) signalled that its in-depth analysis of the European Commission's proposed Digital Network Act would be published in June 2026.

Key messages emerging from the RA's interventions included:

- **Regional Regulatory Associations support the translation of global regulatory principles into regionally actionable solutions.** The Euro Mediterranean Telecom Regulators (EMERG) described regional organizations as practical multipliers of global best practices, accelerating capacity-building and reducing harmful fragmentation. Building on this, the Latin American Forum of Telecommunications Regulatory Entities (REGULATEL) and the Regional Technical Telecommunications Commission for Central American Countries (COMTELCA) framed the contribution of Regional Regulatory Associations as fourfold: trusted technical cooperation, capacity-building, coordination across fragmented approaches, and articulation of regional perspectives in global digital governance discussions.
- **The role of the regulator is evolving towards digital ecosystem stewardship.** Several interventions reflected this evolution from market oversight towards a broader stewardship role. The Communications Regulators Association of Southern Africa (CRASA) articulated the shift through two complementary framings: a whole-of-government approach that moves beyond silos, and the notion of regulation as a service, repositioning regulators as continuous enablers of digital ecosystems rather

than only enforcers. The Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (EaPeReg) and the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) echoed the same evolution from differing institutional starting points.

- **Regulatory interoperability, rather than uniformity, is increasingly seen as the realistic objective for cross-border cooperation.** Interventions converged on the view that effective cross-border governance does not require identical rules across countries. Rather, it calls for compatible principles, technical coordination, predictability, and frameworks that can interface seamlessly across jurisdictions while preserving national policy space.
- **Cross-border challenges call for a collective regional response.** Spectrum coordination, satellite regulation including non-geostationary systems, cybersecurity, AI governance, submarine cable resilience, digital financial services, platform accountability and cross-border data flows were repeatedly identified as challenges that exceed the reach of any individual national regulator and that depend on regional coordination to be addressed effectively.
- **The shift from dialogue to implementation and measurable impact remains a central operational priority of the DRN.** The BDT Director framed this transition in his opening remarks, and the message was echoed across interventions. WATRA, for example, described its evolution from traditional policy coordination towards a results-oriented regulatory framework, while EaPeReg emphasized that modern regulatory governance should be outcome-oriented, adaptive and collaborative.
- **ITU tools are increasingly relied upon as common infrastructure for evidence-based regional regulation.** The Global Economic Model and Study tool (GEMS), the Connectivity Planning Platform (CPP), the ICT Regulatory Tracker, the G5 Benchmark and the Digital Readiness Framework were cited as practical instruments supporting investment assessment, infrastructure planning and evidence-based regulatory decisions at the regional level.
- **Strong national regulatory governance underpins credible regional cooperation.** Transparent decision-making, technical expertise, institutional continuity, accountability and regulatory independence remain important not only domestically but as the foundation for effective regional cooperation, positioning the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines as the governance framework on which inter-regional collaboration can be built.

There was broad agreement that the DRN provides a unique and valuable space for advancing these objectives and for translating global regulatory principles into regionally relevant actions.

5. Main outputs and way forward

In summary, the main outputs emerging from the discussion included:

- the growing importance of coordinated, interoperable regulatory approaches in complex digital ecosystems;

- the need to further leverage the DRN to move from information-sharing toward more structured collaboration and joint initiatives;
- the central role of Regional Regulatory Associations in supporting national regulatory authorities (NRAs) in addressing shared challenges and seizing digital opportunities.

Participants encouraged ITU to continue strengthening the DRN as a practical mechanism for sustained cooperation among regulators and regions.

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked all participants for their active engagement and valuable contributions. He reaffirmed the importance to further develop the DRN as a platform that enables collective learning, convergence of approaches, and effective regulatory responses to the evolving digital landscape. The participating Regional Regulatory Associations reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration through the DRN, to supporting the dissemination and implementation of the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines, and to engaging actively with the Industry Advisory Group on Development Issues as a complementary platform for dialogue with industry.

Annex 1

Regional Regulatory Associations – Main activities and proposals

1. Association of Communications and Telecommunications Regulators of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (ARCTEL)

Main activities

- Promotes dialogue, exchange of experience, and development of regulatory practice among Portuguese-speaking countries.
- Focuses on strengthening institutional and regulatory environments supportive of innovation, policy harmonization, and regulatory capacity-building.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Formal request to join the Digital Regulation Network (DRN) Board Members.
- Commitment to contribute to DRN pillars, particularly capacity development and thought leadership, and to share regulatory experiences across regions.

2. Arab Regulators Network of Telecommunications and Information Technologies (AREGNET)

Main activities

- Transitioning from traditional telecom regulation toward a holistic digital ecosystem approach.
- Strong focus on RegTech, regulatory sandboxes, and real-world testing of emerging technologies, including AI, cloud infrastructure, and space-based communications.
- Active regional alignment on spectrum planning and joint capacity-building initiatives.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Use the DRN to scale data-driven, evidence-based regulatory tools across regions.
- Strengthen regulatory interoperability, ensuring technical and legal frameworks can interface seamlessly across borders.

3. Assembly of Telecommunications Regulators of Central Africa (ARTAC)

Main activities

- Adoption of a new strategic plan focused on regulatory harmonization across Central Africa.
- Implementation of collaborative mechanisms addressing emerging technologies, including satellite technologies and digital financial services.
- Use of regional observatories and data tools to support regulatory decisions.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Leverage the DRN to share expertise and experiences across regions.
- Reinforce joint efforts to promote social and economic development through coordinated regulation.
- Strengthen preparedness and capacity through collective DRN engagement.

4. Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU)

Main activities

- Establishment of an Implementation Committee to advance a collaborative regional regulatory body for telecommunications and ICT.

- Regional cooperation on spectrum coordination, cybersecurity, roaming, satellite services, and infrastructure resilience.
- Launch of the Caribbean AI Task Force to promote harmonized AI governance.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Use DRN to support harmonization, pooled expertise, and coordinated responses to cross-border digital challenges. It was recalled that updates on its regional regulatory initiatives were also shared at the ITU Policy and Economics Colloquium (IPEC) for the Americas, including the session held in Montevideo in 2025.
- Promote regulatory consistency and institutional capacity through DRN cooperation. It was highlighted that these exchanges at IPEC were presented as an important complement to the work under the Digital Regulation Network, reinforcing regional cooperation and practical regulatory coordination in cross-border digital ecosystems.
- Align regional initiatives with the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines on Regulatory Governance Essentials.

5. Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL)

Main activities

- Long-standing regional regulatory model supporting liberalization and shared legal and economic expertise.
- Expansion of mandate to address AI, cybersecurity, blockchain, data centres, internet exchange points, and domain name management.
- Development towards a formal Regional Regulatory Body endorsed by Caribbean governments.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Share the Caribbean regional regulatory model as a replicable good practice.
- Use DRN to exchange experiences on evolving regional governance structures, as done through the IPEC for the Americas Region.
- Support practical, institutionally viable forms of regional regulation aligned with governance principles.

6. Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO)

Main activities

- Delivery of customized regulatory capacity-building programmes in AI, 5G, IoT, cloud, satellites, and digital public infrastructure.
- Structured peer learning among regulators across the Commonwealth.
- Focus on public-interest-based, neutral regulatory support.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Strengthen cooperation with ITU and the DRN as trusted platforms for regulator support.
- Align capacity-building initiatives with adaptive, effective regulatory governance principles.
- Promote practical tools enabling regulators to manage complexity in digital ecosystems.

7. Communications Regulators Association of Southern Africa (CRASA)

Main activities

- Promotion of whole-of-government and ecosystem-based regulatory approaches.
- Conceptual shift toward “regulation as a service”.
- Strengthening institutional interoperability and cross-sector coordination.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Use the DRN to support collaborative ecosystem regulation and interoperability.
- Encourage ICT regulators to take leadership roles in converging regulatory mandates.
- Leverage DRN and ITU platforms for capacity development and joint research.

8. Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (EaPeReg)

Main activities

- Cooperation on broadband development, regulatory governance, spectrum, roaming, and market analysis.
- Promotion of evidence-based regulation supported by tools such as GEMS and the Connectivity Planning Platform (CPP).
- Alignment with European and international regulatory approaches.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Use DRN to scale agile governance models and evidence-based tools.
- Promote collaborative, outcome-oriented governance to respond to fast-evolving digital markets.
- Strengthen cross-border cooperation on cybersecurity, cloud, and satellite connectivity.

9. Euro-Mediterranean Regulators Group (EMERG)

Main activities

- Regional cooperation on regulatory harmonization, roaming, cybersecurity, spectrum coordination, and digital inclusion.
- Peer-to-peer support enabling rapid policy responses and shared problem-solving.
- Collaboration with other RAs and ITU.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Strengthen inter-regional cooperation and operational links with the DRN.
- Improve mechanisms to replicate and scale successful regional initiatives.
- Use DRN to reduce fragmentation and adapt global best practices into actionable regional solutions.

10. Francophone Telecommunications Network (FRATEL)

Main activities

- Interregional cooperation among French-speaking regulators across multiple continents.
- Practical work on infrastructure connectivity, service quality, satellite regulation, and engagement with large digital platforms.
- Organization of structured dialogue with digital platforms.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Share practical regulatory experiences beyond regional boundaries through DRN.
- Contribute to governance approaches addressing platform regulation, data protection, and misinformation.
- Support replication of concrete regulatory practices rather than formal harmonization.

11. Comisión Técnica Regional de Telecomunicaciones (COMTELCA)

Main activities

- Represents telecommunications authorities from Central America, the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean, focusing on practical cooperation rather than only regulatory coordination.
- Addresses concrete cross-border telecommunications challenges, including spectrum coordination, infrastructure deployment, international connectivity, and operational interoperability.
- Supports collaboration among national authorities on issues linked to regional infrastructure programmes and interdependent telecommunications initiatives.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Emphasized the importance of practical, results-oriented regional cooperation to address cross-border digital ecosystem challenges.
- Supported the DRN as a platform to facilitate technical coordination and trusted cooperation among authorities facing similar regional challenges.
- Highlighted that effective implementation of the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines on regulatory governance essentials depends on strong national governance combined with flexible, problem-solving regional mechanisms.

12. Foro Latinoamericano de Entes Reguladores de Telecomunicaciones (REGULATEL)

Main activities

- Brings together telecommunications regulators across Latin America, with additional intercontinental participation, to support a collective approach to digital transformation.
- Facilitates exchange of regulatory experience on market development, infrastructure rollout, spectrum management, cybersecurity, OTT services, artificial intelligence, and platform ecosystems.
- Supports regulators in addressing asymmetries in infrastructure, institutional capacity, and market maturity across the region.

Proposals related to DRN and BPGs

- Highlighted the role of Regional Regulatory Associations in helping regulators move from isolated national approaches toward interoperable regulatory ecosystems, while preserving national flexibility.
- Supported the GSR-26 Best Practice Guidelines as a timely framework reinforcing transparency, accountability, regulatory independence, and institutional continuity.
- Endorsed the DRN as a mechanism to strengthen capacity building, regulatory cooperation, and articulation of regional perspectives in global digital governance discussions.
- Emphasized that regional cooperation should remain practical, flexible, and focused on solving concrete regulatory problems.

13. West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA)

Main activities

- Adoption of a 2026-2030 Strategic Plan focused on harmonized digital regulation and measurable impact.
- Broadband infrastructure mapping, submarine cable resilience, free roaming initiatives, and digital financial services regulation.

- Establishment of multiple technical working groups, including on satellite (NGSO) regulation.

Proposals related to the DRN and BPGs

- Use DRN as a model to operationalize collaborative governance and technical harmonization.
- Share evidence-based tools and regional regulatory models across regions.
- Strengthen regional regulatory foundations for cross-border digital trade and digital finance.

14. Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC)

Main activities

- Monitoring Europe's transition toward full-fibre connectivity.
- Analysing the proposed Digital Networks Act (DNA) aimed at regulatory simplification and stronger Single Market coherence.
- Providing advisory input to EU institutions on investment, competition, and infrastructure transition.

Proposals related to the DRN and BPGs

- Emphasised predictable, proportionate, and investment-friendly regulatory governance.
- Supported harmonisation that preserves competition and national regulatory expertise.
- Expressed readiness to share regulatory experience through the DRN.

15. Independent Regulators Group (IRG)

Main activities

- Coordinating cooperation among European national regulatory authorities.
- Addressing infrastructure transition and evolving competition in converging digital markets.
- Contributing national regulatory expertise to European-level discussions.

Proposals related to the DRN and BPGs

- Highlighted the role of independent national regulators in effective governance.
- Supported adaptive, evidence-based, and proportionate regulatory approaches.
- Expressed willingness to engage in interregional exchange through the DRN.