



ITU BDT COMMUNIQUÉ

The Digital Innovation Board launches an Expert Network to advance socio-economic development through mainstreaming foresight in digital policy and business strategies

Valletta, Malta, 29 October 2024 – The second meeting of the Digital Innovation Board of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development was held during the Global Innovation Forum, from 28-30 October in Valletta, Malta.

During the meeting, the Board endorsed the establishment of an Expert Network, a collaborative community that will conduct foresight studies around the strategic goals of the Alliance, namely trends research readiness, open technology innovation, entrepreneurship and SMEs growth, policy experimentation, and ecosystem initiatives acceleration. The foresight study series will be part of the inputs to the next ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, to be held from 17 to 28 November 2025.

The Board is co-chaired by Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, H.E. Dr. Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications of India, and H.E. Dr. 'Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy of Nigeria.

“Our Board, composed of government ministers, private sector leaders, academics, civil society, with rich experience and expertise in innovation and entrepreneurship, is making steady but impactful progress towards developing strategies and approaches that will accelerate progress in key areas, such as healthcare, education, agriculture and finance,” said Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava. “The Board’s second meeting was energized and re-affirmed the need to adopt innovative ways to bridge the connectivity, digital skills and entrepreneurship gaps to be supported by a newly launched Expert Network that will carry out a series of foresight studies and implement the decisions of the Digital Innovation Board, aimed at advancing inclusive socio-economic development to inform digital policymaking and business strategies.”

“I am very pleased to serve as co-chair of the Board of the ‘Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development’ to drive digital innovation and entrepreneurship globally, particularly in developing countries, by facilitating the creation of local enablers to bridge the digital innovation gap and accelerate the impact of digital ecosystems across various sectors,” said H.E. Dr. Neeraj Mittal.

“I see the digital divide as an opportunity, rather than a challenge – a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between citizens and government, repair trust and create jobs that will allow many more of our people participate in the global digital economy. There is a role for

governments to create the right environment for the private sector to collaborate as we invest in connectivity and the critical digital infrastructure required to lift the economy by improving productivity across sectors like education and agriculture. By doing this, we also have a chance to deliver government services better to citizens as we build a more sustainable and inclusive innovation ecosystem,” said H.E. Dr. ‘Bosun Tijani.

The Expert Network will bring together members from governments, industry, international organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations, and experts from the ITU Acceleration Centers. The Network will help implement the vision of the Board, conducting foresight studies and research and collaborating to develop actionable insights, creating practical solutions that address key challenges and drive impactful progress. Focus will be on thematic workstreams, and the various groups will work through thematic leads reporting to various clusters of Board Members.

A critical step in driving global innovation

The Board members discussed the work of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance, assessing its impact on digital innovation strategies worldwide and supporting the acceleration of inclusive socio-economic development.

They also acknowledged the progress made by the Alliance through its Acceleration Centers, including the design of the individual centres and their custom roadmaps. Central to the Board discussions were future steps and activities.

During the meeting, the Board:

- Established the Expert Network;
- Heard from the ITU Acceleration Centers and discussed their challenges and opportunities and the impact of their work related to the Sustainable Development Goals and the ITU Regional Initiatives;
- Endorsed the launch of an Initiative Accelerator to jump-start the development of innovation ecosystem initiatives and the ITU Regional Initiatives by bringing stakeholders together to co-create and refine project concepts to accelerate impactful digital solutions;
- Committed to increase outreach and communication efforts to amplify the Board’s mission and build support for digital innovation initiatives worldwide.

About the Digital Innovation Board

The Digital Innovation Board provides strategic guidance, expertise and advocacy for building critical local enablers and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in digital development, to create a more inclusive and equitable digital future for all.

The Board advances the efforts of the Alliance at the global stage, leading the dialogue on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in digital development with relevant stakeholders and prospective partners.

The Board comprises of representatives from governments, private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community. [See the Board’s composition](#).

Resources and background information:

- **Photos and videos:** [ITU Flickr](#)
- **For more information, please visit:**
 - [ITU's Digital Innovation website](#)
 - [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development website](#)
 - [Global Innovation Forum website](#)

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About the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), driving innovation in ICTs together with 193 Member States and a membership of over 900 companies, universities, and international and regional organizations. Established over 150 years ago in 1865, ITU is the intergovernmental body responsible for coordinating the shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoting international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, improving communication infrastructure in the developing world, and establishing the worldwide standards that foster seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems. From broadband networks to cutting-edge wireless technologies, aeronautical and maritime navigation, radio astronomy, oceanographic and satellite-based earth monitoring as well as converging fixed-mobile phone, Internet and broadcasting technologies, ITU is committed to connecting the world. For more information, visit www.itu.int