



BDT COMMUNIQUÉ

The ITU Regional Development Forum for Asia-Pacific highlights the transformative power of strong partnerships and collaboration

Bangkok, Thailand, 17 July 2026

The annual ITU Regional Development Forum for the Asia-Pacific region, held on 16 and 17 July 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand, welcomed around 160 participants representing 26 Member States and the State of Palestine under Resolution 99, Regional Organizations, UN specialized agencies, Sector Members, Academia and other stakeholders to discuss priority development issues for the region including the implementation of the new Regional Initiatives adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2025 (WTDC-25).

The Forum was organized by the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in coordination with the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and hosted by the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) of Thailand and chaired by Clinical Professor Dr Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruk, Chairman of NBTC.

The Forum exchanged views on the state of digital development and trends in the region, addressing infrastructure and connectivity gaps, policy and regulatory readiness, artificial intelligence, digital skills, investment environments and the enabling conditions needed to scale digital transformation. It emphasized the critical importance of accelerating universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity; strengthening cooperation; and turning commitments into measurable implementation across Asia and the Pacific.

“With 2.2 billion people still offline worldwide, closing the digital divide requires strong regional cooperation and effective partnerships. The Asia-Pacific region has demonstrated what can be achieved when we work together,” said Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau, in his opening address. “The region is one of the world’s most dynamic hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship. Its contributions to our resource mobilization effort is helping fund impactful projects in the region and around successfully to addressing today’s most pressing challenges,” he continued.

“The Regional Development Forum is an opportunity to put people at the centre of our discussions and make digital an ecosystem enabler thus accelerating inclusive socio-economic development for everyone—especially the marginalized and underserved communities. My sincere thanks to NBTC for hosting us,” he added.

Under the theme ‘Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and

sustainable digital future', participants reported on the state of digital development and trends in the region and the outcomes of WTDC-25. They also discussed digital infrastructure for universal and meaningful connectivity, the implementation of the Regional Initiatives, ITU's role in the UN system and its contribution at the regional and country levels to foster digital development.

"This year's theme reminds us that connectivity is no longer only about infrastructure, but it is also about creating opportunities for people and ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital world," said Dr Boonbaichaiyapruk.

The Regional Partner2Connect Matchmaking Roundtable sessions allowed participants to match countries and regional needs with stakeholders' interests to support digital development in the Asia-Pacific region.

"I am delighted to note that this Regional Development Forum provided the member countries, partners, industry and academia in Asia and the Pacific with an opportunity to learn from each other and discuss collaboration for the implementation of ITU's Regional Initiatives" said Ms Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director of the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

Announcements:

During the Regional Development Forum, several announcements were made:

- The partnership with Australia's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts to support the Pacific Islands countries to enhance e-waste management through awareness, policy development, and scalable solutions.
- The cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan will harness AI and expand access to digital services in rural and remote communities by strengthening capacity across the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions and the integration of the Smart Villages and Smart Islands initiative with the Early Warnings for All initiative.
- The collaboration with Huawei will feature new activities to accelerate digital innovation and entrepreneurship in the region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The work will support the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional initiatives and help create stronger environments for innovation, entrepreneurship and inclusive digital transformation.
- Together with the Islamic Development Bank, the Smart Villages and Smart Islands initiative will be scaled-up, building on the strong results achieved in Gokina, Sambriyal and Swabi in Pakistan. The next phase will strengthen existing Smart Villages and expand access to connectivity, digital skills and essential services for around 2,500 more people, with a focus on women and youth.

- The collaboration with Amazon Web Services will leverage cloud technologies and AI in support of women entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia. Through knowledge sharing, research and innovation, joint activities will explore how emerging digital technologies can expand economic opportunities and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development across the region.
- In cooperation with the Internet Society, a new publication titled “[From Telecentres and Community Networks to Sustainable Smart Villages and Smart Islands](#)” was launched. Drawing on case studies across India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Vanuatu, the research examines what makes community-based digital initiatives sustainable and offers practical insights and good practices to inform future Smart Villages and Smart Islands initiative.
- A joint declaration with the Telecommunications Technology Association of the Republic of Korea will strengthen capacity development across the Asia and the Pacific region. The partnership will expand expert engagement, training and knowledge sharing, help build the capabilities of ICT professionals and stakeholders, and support countries in better applying global standards to their national digital transformation efforts.
- A new collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) will bring together UNIDO’s expertise in industrial development and resource efficiency and ITU-D’s policy, regulatory and capacity-development experience to help countries strengthen e-waste management and advance more sustainable, circular digital economies.
- Emergency telecommunications equipment will be pre-positioned at the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management in Jakarta, Indonesia, to ensure its rapid deployment, and activation significantly reducing the time needed to deliver critical communications support, especially to first responders, when disasters occur.
- A new partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) will advance the Early Warnings for All initiative in Cambodia and Fiji to strengthen national capacity for warning dissemination and communication, helping ensure timely, reliable, and actionable alerts reach people at risk, particularly in vulnerable and remote communities.

The Forum concluded with a renewed call for stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of the Regional Initiatives, strengthen measurable delivery, and scale partnerships that close connectivity gaps while enabling secure, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable digital transformation.

The draft RDF outcome report will be available on the RDF Asia-Pacific website.

Resources and background information:

- [RDF-ASP website](#)
- [RDF-ASP photos](#)
- [RDF-ASP highlights video](#)

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About the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations agency for digital technologies, driving innovation for people and the planet with 194 Member States and a membership of over 1,000 companies, universities, civil society, and international and regional organizations. Established in 1865, ITU coordinates the global use of the radio spectrum and satellite orbits, establishes international technology standards, drives universal connectivity and digital services, and is helping to make sure everyone benefits from sustainable digital transformation, including the most remote communities. From artificial intelligence (AI) to quantum, from satellites and submarine cables to advanced mobile and wireless broadband networks, ITU is committed to connecting the world and beyond.

For more information, visit: www.itu.int