# ITU Regional Development Forum for Asia and the Pacific (RDF-ASP) 2026

***Universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future***

**16–17 July 2026**

**Hotel Conrad Bangkok, 87/3 Wireless Road, Lumpini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand**

Event website: itu.int/go/RDF-ASP-26

# OUTCOME REPORT

## 1. Introduction

The ITU Regional Development Forum for Asia and the Pacific (RDF-ASP) 2026 was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and hosted by the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (Office of the NBTC) of Thailand. The Forum was organized from 16 to 17 July 2026 at Hotel Conrad Bangkok, Bangkok, Thailand, and was held back-to-back with the 23rd APT Telecommunication/ICT Development Forum (ADF-23), which was organized from 14 to 15 July 2026.

Held under the theme “Universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future”, RDF-ASP 2026 brought together 166 participants representing 26 ITU Member States, State of Palestine (Resolution 99) , Sector Members, Associate and Academia Members, Regional organizations, United Nations agencies, and other stakeholders to discuss implementation of the World Telecommunication Development Conference-25 (WTDC-25) outcomes, and exchange views on achieving meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation. In addition, the Forum served as a platform to match country and regional needs with potential partners through the Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition.

The Forum programme (Annex 1) included sessions on State of Digital Development and Trends - Challenges & Opportunities; Infrastructure Development for Universal Meaningful Connectivity; Building upon the outcomes of the WTDC and new resolutions introduced; Building UN partnerships to achieve WTDC outcomes; ITU Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific; and Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable. The Forum also featured sessions dedicated to partnership announcements. The Forum also received 19 contributions (Annex 2).

## 2. Opening session and appointment of the RDF-ASP Chair

The opening ceremony of RDF-ASP 2026 included address by Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck, Chairman of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand, Dr Masanori Kondo, Secretary General, Asia Pacific Telecommunity, and Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT).

Clinical Professor Boonbaichaiyapruck welcomed the participants to RDF-ASP 2026 and thanked ITU for organizing the RDF-ASP 2026. He remarked that it is not only about connectivity but also about creating opportunities for people and ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital world. Clinical Professor Boonbaichaiyapruck emphasized the important role played by this Regional Development Forum (RDF) in building on the outcomes of WTDC-25 to advance the digital development priorities of Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Masanori Kondo, Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) in his remarks thanked ITU for inviting APT to the RDF-ASP 2026 and expressed his gratitude to the Office of the NBTC for the warm hospitality. While thanking ITU for the long-lasting partnership, Dr Kondo shared the important role that APT plays in progressing digital development in the region through projects and partnerships and expressed his commitment to continue strengthening the efforts. Dr Kondo also shared the outcomes of the recently concluded 23rd APT Telecommunication/ICT Development Forum (ADF-23) in areas of digital connectivity, digital transformation, trust and safety, and called upon the participants to continue the discussion in RDF-ASP 2026.

In his remarks, Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, thanked the Office of the NBTC for hosting the Forum and congratulated the APT on the success of the 23rd Asia-Pacific Development Forum. He highlighted the region's diversity and the ITU-D priorities, which aligned with ITU's strategic goals of universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation. Dr Zavazava shared BDT programmes and activities, including the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR), Child Online Protection, Emergency Telecommunications, Early Warnings for All (EW4All), Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity Planning Platform, Global Economic Model and Study Tool, and cybersecurity initiatives. He emphasized the growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and the need to ensure that its benefits reach women, children, persons with disabilities, and other underserved groups. Referring to the Baku Action Plan and the five Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives, he thanked ITU Members and partners for their support. He also underscored the role of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, which has mobilized pledges exceeding USD 100 billion globally, and called on stakeholders to translate commitments into measurable impact through stronger partnerships and collective action. He concluded by thanking APT for fostering regional consensus and cooperation towards meeting the WTDC objectives.

This was followed by a group photograph of Forum participants. Following the opening addresses, the ITU Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Dr Atsuko Okuda, proposed Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck's appointment as the Chair of the ITU Regional Development Forum for Asia and the Pacific. The Forum appointed Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck as the RDF-ASP 2026 Chair with applause.

Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck accepted the position, thanked the participants for their support and delegated Mr Saneh Saiwong, Principal Engineering Expert, Office of the NBTC to serve as chair on his behalf.

The opening session can be followed at itu.int/go/RDF-ASP-26.

## 3. Session 1: State of digital development and trends – challenges and opportunities

Session 1 focused on an overview of the current state of digital development in Asia and the Pacific, and the challenges and opportunities. It highlighted emerging trends, structural challenges and strategic opportunities shaping the region's digital transformation, focusing on infrastructure and connectivity, policy and regulatory readiness, digital skills and investment environments.

The session was moderated by

Mr Toni Eid, Founder, Telecom Review.

The panelists included

- Dr Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific;
- Mr Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid, Senior ICT Specialist, Islamic Development Bank;
- Dr Muhammad Amir Malik, Member (International Coordination), Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication (MoITT);
- Mr Adam Coin, Counsellor (Economic), Australian Embassy, Thailand;
- Mr Atul Sinha, Director General, National Communications Academy Technology (NCA-T), India (virtually)

The session provided an overview of the state of digital development in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting the key challenges, emerging trends and strategic opportunities shaping the region's digital transformation. Presentation focused on highlighting the key trends and statistics in digital infrastructure and connectivity, urban rural and gender digital divide, policy and regulatory readiness, cybersecurity and AI readiness. The region has made significant progress in expanding connectivity, with internet use increasing from 30% in 2010 to 77.1% in 2025, while mobile broadband subscriptions now exceed the global average, driving digital transformation across many economies. Nevertheless, important disparities remain, including gaps in 5G deployment, which is widespread in high-income economies but still unavailable in many others, as well as persistent gender and rural-urban digital divides. The session also highlighted that the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence risks widening existing digital inequalities if the underlying digital infrastructure is not strengthened. Analysis presented during the session showed a positive correlation between AI readiness and international bandwidth, underscoring the importance of robust digital infrastructure as a foundation for AI adoption. The session further highlighted ITU's key thematic priorities and work on network and digital infrastructure, emergency telecommunication, circular economy and E-waste, digital inclusion, whole of government approach and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), cybersecurity and Smart Villages and Smart Islands (SVSI) in the region that are contributing towards the implementation of the regional initiatives. Speakers shared national experiences, highlighting successful initiatives, ongoing challenges, and opportunities to deepen collaboration with the ITU to accelerate inclusive and sustainable digital transformation across the region.

Panelists from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Government of Pakistan, the Australian Government and the Government of India highlighted that connectivity must translate into meaningful development outcomes through digital skills, affordable access, trusted digital ecosystems and strong partnerships. Speakers showcased successful initiatives, including ITU's Smart Villages and Smart Islands project implementation in Pakistan, Australia's investments in digital inclusion and literacy, and India's BharatNet and Smaridhi Kendra project that delivers integrated digital services to communities. Discussions also explored emerging issues such as AI readiness, cybersecurity, mobile number portability and rural connectivity, with participants stressing the need for meaningful connectivity. The session concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening regional cooperation, scaling proven digital development models, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital transformation journey.

**Key takeaways:**

- Universal meaningful connectivity remains the region's top priority. The Forum recognized that the Asia-Pacific region, home to approximately 60% of the world's population and one of the fastest-growing regions globally, has made remarkable progress in expanding digital connectivity. While connectivity has expanded rapidly across the region, infrastructure alone is not sufficient. Investments must be complemented by affordable access, digital skills, trusted digital services and inclusive policies to ensure that digital transformation delivers meaningful socio-economic benefits for all.
- Asia-Pacific region provides several good examples and experiences to learn and share on connecting the unconnected meaningfully.

- Regional partnerships are essential to accelerate inclusive digital transformation- The forum reaffirmed the importance of partnerships among governments, development partners and other stakeholders on digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital public infrastructure, emerging technologies such as AI, and ITU initiatives such as Smart Villages and Smart Islands, recognizing that regional cooperation is key to building resilient, inclusive and digital transformation.
- AI readiness depends on strong digital foundations. The forum also noted that affordable connectivity, data infrastructure, governance, and human capacity remain prerequisites for successful AI adoption.

## 4. Session 2: Infrastructure development for universal meaningful connectivity

Session 2 held high-level discussion on strategies to accelerate investment and development of digital infrastructure to advance universal and meaningful connectivity in Asia and the Pacific. The discussion featured challenges faced by developing countries (especially least developing countries, landlocked developing countries, small islands developing states) in building high-quality infrastructure that can harness current and emerging technologies, the financing gaps and opportunities, need for appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks, and the importance of collaboration in realizing universal meaningful connectivity.

The session was moderated by

Mr Dulguun Damdin-Od, Executive Director, International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries (ITTLLDC).

The panelists included

- Ms Georgina Garcia, Board Member and Finance Director, National Communication Authority of Timor-Leste;
- Mr Mahesh Uttamchandani, Regional Practice Director for Digital and AI, East Asia and Pacific and South Asia Regions, World Bank;
- Mr Zhai Haipeng, Vice President of Optical Business Product Line;
- Mr Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid, Senior ICT Specialist, Islamic Development Bank.

The session underscored that achieving universal and meaningful connectivity requires far more than extending network coverage. Participants emphasized that connectivity must be affordable, inclusive, resilient, and capable of delivering tangible socioeconomic benefits through access to education, healthcare, public services, financial inclusion, employment opportunities, and participation in the digital economy. Particular attention was given to the unique challenges faced by rural and remote populations, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), women, youth, and underserved communities.

A recurring theme throughout the session was the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships involving governments, regulators, development banks, technology providers, academia, regional organizations, and local communities. Speakers stressed that enabling policy and regulatory frameworks are essential to attract investment and accelerate infrastructure deployment, including through infrastructure sharing, rights-of-way reforms, spectrum management, market liberalization, and competition-enhancing measures. Participants noted that public financing, development assistance, and private sector investment must work together, particularly in commercially unviable rural and remote areas where blended financing models can help bridge persistent connectivity gaps.

The session also highlighted the growing importance of AI-ready and resilient digital infrastructure. It was noted that as AI adoption accelerates, future networks will require greater bandwidth, lower latency, higher reliability, expanded compute capacity, stronger cybersecurity, and data centre infrastructure. The need for locally relevant AI solutions, responsible governance frameworks, and broader participation in emerging digital ecosystems was strongly emphasized.

Several practical examples shared during the session demonstrated how digital infrastructure can drive development outcomes. Timor-Leste shared its submarine cable project, nationwide 4G expansion, satellite

broadband deployment, and digital government initiatives. Development partners highlighted investments in backbone networks, digital identity systems, digital public services, smart villages, and capacity-building initiatives. Huawei further showcased innovative approaches such as low-cost fibre deployment models, open-source telecommunications platforms, AI-grade connectivity concepts, and regional cooperation initiatives to strengthen resilient and future-ready infrastructure.

In addition, 3 contributions to RDF-ASP 2026 were introduced

- AI-Grade Connectivity as a Foundation for National Development: Lessons from BIRD Initiative submitted by Global Plan Inc was introduced by Mr Haruo Okamura (virtual),
- Democratizing Technology: Using Open Standards and Open Source (in line with the WTDC-25 resolution 15, Applied Research and Transfer of Technology) submitted by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Indian Institute of Information Technology Bengaluru (IIITB), Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD), Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), and Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA))
- Regional Cooperation on AI-ready, IPv6-native and Resilient Digital Infrastructure for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity submitted by Socialist Republic of Viet Nam was introduced by introduced by moderator on behalf of Mr. Nguyen Quy Quyen.

**Key takeaways:**

- Universal meaningful connectivity requires more than coverage, encompassing affordability, digital skills, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, and relevant digital services.
- Enabling policies, regulatory reforms, and infrastructure sharing are critical to attract investment and expand broadband deployment.
- Stronger public-private-development partnerships and blended financing models are needed to connect underserved and commercially unviable areas.
- Countries should leverage a mix of technologies including fibre, submarine cables, satellite systems, and innovative low-cost solutions to overcome geographic barriers and close connectivity gaps.
- AI is reshaping infrastructure needs, requiring investment in high-capacity networks, data centres, compute resources, and trusted digital ecosystems.
- Regional cooperation and inclusive, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches are essential to ensure that digital infrastructure delivers sustainable and equitable development outcomes for all communities.

## 5. Partnership announcements

During RDF-ASP 2026, the following partnership announcements were made:

| Name of entity | Title of announcement | In presence of |
|---|---|---|
| Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCSA) - ITU | Project on "Creating a Circular Economy for Electronics in the Pacific" | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Adam Coin, Counsellor (Economic), Australian Embassy, Thailand |
| Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) Japan - ITU | Intention to proceed with new Project on “Harnessing artificial intelligence and enhancing access to digital services for inclusive and resilient societies” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Ryo Horikawa, Director, Global Strategy Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Huawei - ITU | Intention to proceed with new Project on “Accelerating Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific to Achieve the SDGs (ADIE-AP-SDGs)” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Denny Deng, Senior Vice President, APAC, Carrier Network Business, Huawei |
| | | |
| Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) - ITU | Intention to proceed with new Project on “Scaling Up of Smart Villages in Pakistan” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid, Senior ICT Specialist, Islamic Development Bank. |
| Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), Republic of Korea – ITU | Joint Declaration on "ICT Standardization and Capacity Building for Asia-Pacific" | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Seung Hyun Son, President, Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), Republic of Korea |
| Amazon Web Services (AWS) - ITU | Collaboration between ITU and AWS on " AI, Cloud, Innovation Cafes, and Women’s Digital Entrepreneurship" | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Ms Monique Viengkhou, Strategy and Policy Head, Public Policy, APJ, Amazon Web Services |
| Internet Society (ISOC) - ITU | Joint publication on “From Telecentres, Community Networks To Sustainable Smart Villages and Smart Islands - Case Studies” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Adrian Wan, Director, Policy and Advocacy |
| The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) - ITU | Cooperation and collaboration in Emergency Telecommunications | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Mr Somsanith Ninthavong, Director of Corporate Affairs, AHA Centre |
| United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – ITU | Intention to proceed with new Project on “Global Electronics Management Programme” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Ms Sooksiri Chamsuk, Deputy Representative, UNIDO Subregional Office in Thailand |
| United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – ITU | Intention to proceed with new Multi-Country Project on Advancing Early Warnings for All (EW4All) (Multi-Country Project) - Fiji and Cambodia II” | Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, BDT, ITU and Ms Aishath Azza, Regional Technical Specialist – Climate Change Adaptation), UNDP |

**6. Session 3: Building upon the outcomes of WTDC and new Resolutions**

Session 3 discussed the new resolutions adopted during WTDC-25, in particular Resolution 91 (Artificial intelligence technologies in telecommunication development) and Resolution 94 (Supporting digital

transformation in Pacific Island countries pursuant to the Lagatoi Declaration), and shared ideas on how they can be translated into tangible action across Asia and the Pacific.

The session was moderated by Mr Teuku Nasrullah, ICT Manager, The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), Indonesia.

The panelists included

- Mr Kishore Babu G.S.C. Yerraballa, ITU Area Representative for Southeast Asia & other Member States in Asia and the Pacific
- Mr Yoshiaki Nagaya, Director, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan (virtual)
- Mr Ugyen Dorji, ICT Officer, Emerging Technology Division, Government Technology (GovTech) Agency of Bhutan
- Mr Fini Iuni, Acting Director of the Department of Information, Communication, and Technology, Tuvalu (virtual)
- Prof. Siddharth Jabade, Vice President for Administration & Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand

The session focused on implementing the outcomes of WTDC-25, with particular emphasis on Resolution 91 on Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Telecommunication Development and Resolution 94 on Supporting Digital Transformation in Pacific Island Countries pursuant to the Lagatoi Declaration. The discussion highlighted the Baku Action Plan, the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives, ITU-D Study Groups, and the revised and new ITU-D resolutions as the framework for advancing digital development across the region.

Participants emphasized the need to move from AI awareness to practical implementation by strengthening AI readiness, institutional capacity, digital skills, and responsible AI adoption. The discussion highlighted the importance of knowledge-sharing, international standards and collaboration among governments, academia, industry, development partners and international organizations to accelerate AI adoption and innovation, and other important areas such as Digital Public Infrastructure.

The session also underscored the importance of sustained technical assistance, financing, and regional cooperation to support the implementation of Resolution 94 and the Lagatoi Declaration. Participants recognized the complementary roles of academia in fostering research and knowledge-sharing, and the private sector in developing innovative AI-enabled solutions to expand meaningful connectivity, digital inclusion and financial inclusion.

In addition, 2 contributions to RDF-ASP 2026 were presented

- “AI-Powered Communication Infrastructure for Inclusive Digital Transformation” submitted by Eocean Private Limited (Pakistan)”
- Advancing Meaningful Connectivity Through Smartphone Affordability and AI-Enabled Financial Inclusion submitted by Kistpay Private Limited (Pakistan)

**Key takeaways:**

- WTDC-25 Resolution 91 on Artificial intelligence technologies in telecommunication development and Resolution 94 on Supporting digital transformation in the Pacific Island countries pursuant to the Lagatoi Declaration are of particular significance to the region.

- AI and DPI capacity-building should focus on implementation, equipping governments with the skills. Institutional capacity to be built to apply AI responsibly in public services and priority sectors

- Knowledge-sharing, standards and regional cooperation remain essential to strengthening AI readiness and exchanging implementation experiences.
- Pacific Island countries require sustained technical assistance, financing and partnerships to implement the Lagatoi Declaration and advance resilient digital transformation.
- Stronger collaboration among governments, academia, industry, development partners and the private sector will be essential to mobilize expertise, foster innovation and implement the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives.
- AI-enabled connectivity and affordable digital access can help expand meaningful connectivity and financial inclusion, particularly for underserved communities.

**7. Session 4: Building UN partnerships to achieve WTDC outcomes**

Session 4 examined how strengthened partnerships across the United Nations system can accelerate digital development and support the implementation of the WTDC outcomes and ITU Regional Initiatives in Asia and the Pacific. The discussion highlighted the role of digital transformation as an enabler of sustainable development and explored opportunities for collaboration among UN agencies, governments, development partners, and regional organizations.

The session was moderated by Mr. K.K. Yoganaadan, Director of Science, Technology, Innovation, Human Resource Development and Health at BIMSTEC.

The panelists included

- Mr. Yongqing Chen, Technical Coordinator (Infrastructure), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- Dr. Rabi Rasaily, Acting Programme Coordinator, EU-STREIT joint programme, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (virtual)
- Mr. Ken Chamuva Shawa, Head of the Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit (RESA), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Ms. Ellennor Grace Francisco, United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO)
- Ms. Diana Patricia Mosquera Calle, Deputy Chief, Regional Office for Asia Pacific, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

The session highlighted the value of UN partnerships in accelerating digital transformation and sustainable development across the Asia-Pacific region. WMO opened the discussion by presenting the State of the Global Climate 2025, noting the increasing impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, sea-level rise, and more frequent extreme weather events. WMO emphasized the need to move from forecasting hazards to enabling early action through the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative, stressing the importance of national ownership, sustainable financing, and strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships. The discussion underscored the importance of continued collaboration between WMO and ITU, particularly in strengthening warning dissemination and communication systems. Moderator recognized BIMSTEC's partnership with ITU in supporting capacity building for the development of digital government interoperability frameworks. FAO subsequently shared experiences from the EU-STREIT Papua New Guinea Joint Programme, demonstrating how collaboration among multiple UN agencies has leveraged digital technologies to strengthen agricultural value chains, improve connectivity, build digital skills and enhance livelihoods in rural communities.

ILO highlighted the transformative impact of artificial intelligence, automation and digitalization on labour markets, noting that AI is reshaping tasks more than replacing jobs and emphasizing the need for AI-ready skills, responsible AI governance and inclusive labour market policies. UNDCO stressed the importance of coordinated UN support and integrated implementation approaches, noting that the ITU Regional Initiatives align closely with broader regional development priorities and require tailored responses reflecting diverse national circumstances. UNDRR emphasized the importance of disaster risk knowledge, data governance,

and risk-informed decision-making, while highlighting the potential of emerging technologies, including AI, to strengthen disaster risk assessment and preparedness. Across the discussion, participants agreed that achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable digital transformation requires strong partnerships, national leadership, investments in infrastructure and human capacity, and coordinated action across the UN system to ensure that no one is left behind. Session concluded recognizing that the ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives implementation is being strengthened through meaningful UN partnerships.

**Key takeaways:**

- Country-led implementation, tailored approaches reflecting differing levels of digital readiness, and strong partnerships amongst UN agencies is strengthening the implementation of WTDC outcomes
- Urgent need to strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems through enhanced cooperation, sustainable financing, digital technologies and effective warning dissemination mechanisms, while noting progress under the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative.
- National ownership, enabling policies, institutional capacity, good governance, and resource mobilization in key achieving sustainable and inclusive digital transformation.
- Digital agriculture solutions have great potential in improving productivity across value chains.
- Artificial intelligence is transforming labour markets and work processes, underscoring the need for investments in digital skills, lifelong learning, responsible AI governance and social protection measures.
- Strengthening disaster risk knowledge, data governance, interoperability and the use of emerging technologies, including AI and data analytics, is important to support risk-informed decision-making and disaster resilience.

**8. Session 5: ITU Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific**

Session 5 and Session 6 focused on the five Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific adopted during WTDC-25 that are expected to address themes relevant to

- Addressing special needs of least developed countries, small island developing states, including Pacific Island countries, and landlocked developing countries (ASP 1);
- Harnessing telecommunications/ICTs to support inclusive and sustainable digital transformation (ASP 2);
- Fostering development of infrastructure to enhance digital connectivity and connecting the unconnected (ASP 3);
- Enabling an innovative and sustainable telecommunication/information and communication technology sector (ASP 4);
- Supporting a safe, secure and resilient telecommunication/information and communication technology environment (ASP 5).

Session 5 facilitated a strategic dialogue on the implementation of the five Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific adopted at WTDC-25. It provided a platform for Member States and stakeholders to exchange views on the priorities and regional needs that shaped the development of these initiatives, and to discuss approaches for fostering collaboration, partnerships, and coordinated action to achieve their expected results.

The session was moderated by

Mr Viengvilay Setthanon, Deputy Director General, Lao Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Lao PDR

The panelists included

- Dr. Muhammad Amir Malik, Member (International Coordination), Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication (MoITT), Pakistan
- Ms. Minah Lee, Head of the Global Standards Cooperation Center, Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), Republic of Korea
- Prof. Isao Nakajima, Vice-Rapporteur for Q1/2 ITU-D SG2, Seisa University, Yokohama, Japan
- Mr. Gomer Padong, LocNet Policy and Regulations Coordinator for Asia, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Dr. Puji Pujiono, National Adviser, Disaster Management Authority, Republic of Indonesia

Session 5 shared socio-economic challenges faced by rural and remote communities, and experiences of Smart Villages in Pakistan, implemented by MoITT with ITU and Huawei, and Islamic Development Bank. The session highlighted the importance of digital health, tele-education, and digital skills in empowering local communities to address their challenges. It underscored the importance of setting up national strategy and governance mechanisms to scale out Smart villages and smart islands. Session emphasized the importance of bridging the standardization gap and underscored the importance of capacity building in the standardization ecosystem to accelerate research and development, standards development and market application of technology. It highlighted the alignment of standardization activities with ASP RI 2 and 5, and shared experience of TTA (Republic of Korea) in building capacity in cybersecurity with ITU in the region and called for enhanced international collaboration with ITU. Session deliberated on the work being undertaken by ITU-D Study Groups in progressing eHealth in rural and remote areas that would bring great benefits to individuals, country, industry and medical service providers by improving access to health services and facilitating knowledge for research. It also shared information on eHealth use cases of remote robotic surgery via 5G, the importance of using constellation satellites to provide telehealth, and clinical medicines supported by cloud networks. Session shared BDT's work on advancing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Be Healthy Be Mobile, Smart cities, villages and islands, GovStack, and Open Source Ecosystem Enabler (OSSE).

Deliberated on the importance of local network and shared example of LocNet led by APC. As commercial models on their own are unable to provide universal coverage, it is important to embed community-based connectivity solutions in national policies (e.g., Indonesia and the Philippines) and to provide the necessary regulatory support. Digital inclusion, such as gender-based initiatives as well as local economic development, is important to create sustainable and meaningful solutions. Session shared APC initiatives and invited ITU to partner with APC to collaborate in the initiative to accelerate universal meaningful connectivity. Furthermore, the session recognized the importance of early warning for all and shared Indonesia's comprehensive framework across risk knowledge, detection and forecasting, preparedness and response, and dissemination aligned with the 4 pillars of EW4ALL. It recognized the importance of timely communication across various agencies, as delayed warnings put lives at risk. Session called upon ITU and Members to adopt common standards such as ITU-T standard, Common Alerting Protocol, progress on the availability of Public Protection and Disaster Relief (PPDR) spectrum, enhance cross-border interoperability, and provide technical assistance on the disaster connectivity maps.

**Key takeaways:**

- ‘Smart Villages and Smart Islands’ accelerates inclusive development by addressing socio-economic challenges in rural and remote communities, as demonstrated by Pakistan’s Smart Villages initiative and called upon the need for national leadership, governance and policy frameworks.
- Bridging the standardization gap is critical to accelerate innovation, technology adoption and market deployment, requiring strengthened capacity building, research and development, and enhanced international collaboration.

- Emerging digital health technologies are transforming healthcare access and have great potential to enhance access to healthcare in rural and remote areas.
- Community-based connectivity solutions are indispensable for universal and meaningful connectivity, particularly in underserved areas where commercial models alone are insufficient;
- Countries should endeavour to integrate community networks into national policies and regulatory frameworks while promoting digital inclusion and local economic development.
- Strengthening disaster resilience requires interoperable early warning systems and standards-based approaches, as demonstrated by Indonesia.

**9. Session 6: ITU Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific: Contributions & Presentation of Contributions to RDF**

Session 6 continued the discussion on ITU Regional Initiatives for Asia and the Pacific. The contributions during the session focused on innovation, network of accelerators, digital inclusion, Network of Women, digital services, and areas of convergence across initiatives.

Participants gained a shared understanding of the strategic priorities underpinning the regional initiatives and identified key approaches for their joint implementation. The session generated recommendations on strengthening regional cooperation, leveraging Member State contributions, and fostering partnerships to accelerate progress towards the initiatives' objectives.

The session was moderated by

Ms. Nisawan Ngambenjavichaikul, Ph.D. student from the Department of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Chulalongkorn University

The panelists included;

- Mr Mohammed Ba, Head of Digital Innovation Service at ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (virtual)
- Ms. Mina Seonmin Jun, Chair of the Advisory Board of the Network of Women (NoW) in the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D)
- Mr. Ashish Narayan, Programme Coordinator at the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
- Mr. Ilyas Ahmed, Chief Executive, Communications Authority of Maldives (CAM)
- Ms. Gabrielle Iglesias, Policy Adviser, APNIC Foundation
- Mr. Jason Le Yu, External Liaison Supervisor, International Cooperation Department, BRICS Institute of Future Networks (BIFNC).

In addition, the following contributions were presented

- Child Rights by Design for a Safe, Inclusive and Responsible Digital Future in Asia and the Pacific" submitted by 5Rights Foundation.
- Five contributions submitted by the World Wide Fund for Nature
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    - "AI-Powered Identification of Illegal Wildlife Products with Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Systems:"
    - "From Algorithms to Action: Disrupting Wildlife Trafficking in Maritime Supply Chains - An Innovative Technology Solution for Detecting Undeclared and Misdeclared Wildlife Products in Cargo Bookings"
    - "Smart Wetland Management Project (SWMP)"
    - "Zoonotic Risk Predictor Machine Learning System in Mekong region."
    - "WWF-Singapore Cyber Spotter Programme Illegal Wildlife Trade Machine Learning System"

The session focused on practical approaches to implementing the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives (RIs) agreed at WTDC-25 through coordinated action, partnerships, and Member contributions. Discussions highlighted the role of the Regional Innovation Alliance (RIA) framework in supporting country-driven implementation of the RIs through co-design, innovation ecosystems and collaboration among governments, development partners and the private sector. The session shared experiences on digital inclusion, gender equality, digital government and digital public infrastructure, Smart Villages and Smart Islands, resilient connectivity, digital innovation and capacity development.

The discussion emphasized that innovation should be embedded across all development initiatives and that successful digital transformation requires strong partnerships, inclusive approaches and sustained capacity building as shared through the experiences of BIFNC and APNIC Foundation. Speakers highlighted the importance of strengthening digital innovation ecosystems through acceleration centres, evidence-based policymaking, interoperable digital government frameworks, and knowledge-sharing networks. The Network of Women in ITU-D underscored the need to complement networking with mentoring, leadership development and greater participation of women and youth to ensure that digital transformation is inclusive and people-centred.

Participants also stressed the importance of resilient digital infrastructure to support meaningful connectivity and disaster resilience. Drawing on the experience of the Maldives, the discussion highlighted the value of expanding broadband infrastructure, satellite and subsea connectivity, digital broadcasting, and strengthening emergency telecommunications through collaboration across relevant agencies and the adoption of Cell Broadcast systems. The session concluded by reaffirming that coordinated regional cooperation, innovation and partnerships will be critical to translating the Regional Initiatives into tangible development outcomes across Asia and the Pacific.

**Key takeaways:**

- Regional Innovation Alliance (RIA) framework provides a practical mechanism to accelerate implementation of the ASP RI through co-design, innovation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.
- Digital transformation requires an ecosystem approach, bringing together stakeholders to develop scalable and sustainable digital solutions that create impact at community, national and regional level.
- Inclusive digital transformation should prioritize gender equality, mentoring, leadership development, accessibility and greater participation of women and youth in digital initiatives and online protection.
- Capacity building, knowledge exchange and evidence-based policymaking remain essential to helping Members implement interoperable digital government services and strengthen institutional capabilities.
- Resilient and inclusive digital infrastructure, supported by relevant applications, and strengthening emergency telecommunications and early warning systems. The session highlighted the use of cell broadcast systems in protecting human lives.
- Partnerships across regional and international organizations will be essential to mobilize expertise, share innovation, and translate the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives into measurable national and regional impact.

### 10. Sessions 7 and 8: Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable

Sessions 7 and 8 served as Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtables, matching country and regional needs with stakeholder interests to support digital development across Asia and the Pacific. During the sessions, ITU provided an overview of the P2C digital coalition. Following the overview, P2C pledge makers shared progress on implementation and offered new partnership opportunities, while Members expressed keen interest in these offers.

Session 7 was moderated by

Mr Gomer Padong, LocNet Policy and Regulations Coordinator for Asia, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

The panelists included:

- Mr Paul Kasera Demba, Special Initiatives Lead at the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (Virtual)
- Ms. Philomena Gnanapragasam, CEO & Secretary-General, Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development
- H.E. Sok Puthyvuth, Secretary of State, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Cambodia (virtual)
- Mr Derek John Fernandez, Commission Member of MCMC Malaysia
- Mr Cécil Ameil, Director, Regulatory Affairs, SES (virtual)
- Mr Jian Wang, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Department, China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) (virtual)
- Mr Adrian Wan, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Internet Society Mr Gomer Padong, Representative of APC

**Key takeaways:**

- The session demonstrated strong interest among multiple stakeholders in supporting the implementation of Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives through concrete actions, investments, and collaborative programs.
- Partner2Connect continues to provide a valuable platform for aligning country needs with partner expertise and resources.
- Successful digital transformation requires strong collaboration among governments, industry, development organizations, academia, and civil society.
- Capacity development is widely recognized as a key enabler of digital transformation.
- Satellite technologies, community networks, and traditional broadband infrastructure should be viewed as complementary solutions.
- Sustainable digital development depends on local ownership, community participation, and long-term financing.
- Regional knowledge-sharing mechanisms help countries adapt successful models to their contexts.
- Partnerships are most effective when aligned with nationally identified priorities and implementation needs.
- Smart Villages and Smart Islands remain high priorities for regional investment and collaboration.

Session 8 was moderated by

Ms. Monique Viengkhou, Head of Strategy, Operations, and Enablement, Amazon Web Services

The panelists included:

- Ms. Airisha Strasser, Multilateral Engagement, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, Australia (virtual)
- Mr. Vicent Choong Mun Kong, AVP and Senior Specialist, Axiata Group Berhad
- Ms. Angela Wibawa, Director, APAC, Government and IGO Engagement, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (virtual)
- Mr. Zhicheng Qu, Chief Standardization Director for ITU Affairs, ZTE Corporation (virtual)
- Mr. Brian V. Gonzales, Head, Protection of Endangered Species, World Wide Fund for Nature
- Ms. Pamela Kumar, Director-General, IOS-MCN, Indian Institute of Science
- Mr. Vineet Kumar, Founder and Global President, CyberPeace Foundation (virtual)

**Key takeaways:**

- Smart Villages and Smart Islands remain a major focus across Asia-Pacific countries.
- Capacity building remains one of the most frequently requested forms of support.
- AI is creating new opportunities but risks widening digital inequalities if local capabilities are not strengthened.
- Environmental protection, wildlife conservation, and digital development are increasingly interconnected through AI-enabled applications.
- Open-source technologies can support innovation, interoperability, and digital sovereignty.
- Universal Acceptance and multilingual internet access are essential for digital inclusion.
- Cyber resilience requires community engagement alongside technical solutions.

A summary of pledges and interests expressed during P2C matchmaking roundtable sessions is provided below.

**Implementation of existing pledges discussed during RDF-ASP 2026**

| P2C pledge maker | Areas of partnership pledged | Implementation of pledges | Name of entity where the pledge has been implemented |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cambodia | National Partner2Connect Roundtable, other partnerships | Cambodia is cooperating in a number of areas through P2C (e.g. capacity building, GIGA, Smart Villages and Smart Islands) | Cambodia |
| MCMC | NADI, NEXUS | Support to citizens in Malaysia | Malaysia |
| MCMC | Support to Palestine on building capacity | Scholarships for Palestinians under the MCMC Academy and Malaysia Multimedia University was provided to support the ITU Resolution | Palestine |
| AXIATA | 10 pledges made | 8 out of 10 pledges made were implemented that improved life of 8 million users. | Cambodia |
| SES | Connecting schools | 5 Schools in Timor Leste were connected. Next countries Cambodia, Laos, PNG are planned. | Timor Leste |
| CAICT | Capacity building | Customized digital training offered through APT and ITU. Trainings through ITU CoE, ITU ATC, other trainings. | World wide |
| Internet Society | 100 community centred project and train 10000 people | Ober 11 Million USD put in community centre projects and has met the pledges. In 2025, pledged 30 Million to impact 15000 communities Members (ongoing). | World wide |

**New pledges and interests expressed during RDF-ASP 2026**

| P2C pledge maker | Areas of partnership pledged | Entity expressed interest in the pledge during RDF-ASP 2026 |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | Accelerating Digital Transformation in Asia-Pacific - Phase II | Timor Leste, Maldives, Fiji |
| Australia | Creating Circular Economy for Electronics in Pacific Island Countries | Fiji, Nepal |
| Australia | Enhancing the sustainability of Smart Villages and Smart Islands in the Asia-Pacific | Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Nepal |
| AIBD | AIBD pledged to bring digital safety programmes through its capacity building workshops, and impacting 1000 people comprising different age groups (16-70) for a period of 2027 - 2029 | |
| AXIATA | Enhance regulatory and policy capacities in select countries in South Asia through capacity building trainings and workshops | BIMSTEC, AIBD |
| CyberPeace Foundation | Building a Global Network of Cyber First Responders for Inclusive, Safe and Resilient Digital Communities. | Timor Leste |
| Indian Institute of Science | Share open source 5G platform developed in India with other interested in ITU-D community | Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, Department of ICT, Philippines |
| Malaysia MCMC | Scholarships for Palestinians under the MCMC Academy and Malaysia Multimedia University programme to support the ITU Council Resolution | Palestine |
| Malaysia MCMC | MCMC NEXUS Knowledge Sharing and Tools Development Support for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS | Timor Leste, ITTLLDC, Nepal |
| BIMSTEC | AI, digital government, telecommunication, digital inclusion | |
| SES | Support to landlocked developing country | Nepal, ITTLLDC |
| World Wide Fund for Nature | AI-Powered Identification of Illegal Wildlife Products with Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Systems | AIBD |
| World Wide Fund for Nature | WWF-Singapore Cyber Spotter Programme Illegal Wildlife Trade Machine Learning Systems | AIBD |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| World Wide Fund for Nature | Zoonotic Risk Predictor Machine Learning System in Mekong region | AIBD |
| World Wide Fund for Nature | Innovative Technology Solution for Detecting Undeclared and Misdeclared Wildlife Products in Cargo Bookings | AIBD |
| ZTE Corporation | The ZTE AI Ecosystem Partnership Pledge: Over Three Years to Build an Open, Collaborative, and Inclusive AI Value Community | |
| Timor Leste | Capacity building targeting communities and digital inclusion of women | Timor Leste |

### 11. Presentation of the Draft RDF-ASP 2026 Report by the Chair

On behalf of RDF-ASP 2026 Chair Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck, Mr Saneh Saiwong, Principal Engineering Expert, Office of the NBTC presented the key takeaways and highlights of the Forum. The Chair informed the participants that the draft report will be available on the RDF-ASP 2026 website by **22 July 2026.**

Participants were invited to share any comments on the draft report with the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific at ITU-RO-AsiaPacific@itu.int by **31 July 2026**.

### 12. Closing session

The closing segment started with the presentation of a certificate of appreciation to the RDF-ASP Chair, Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck, in recognition of his leadership and contribution to the success of the Forum.

This was followed by closing remarks from Mr Saneh Saiwong, Principal Engineering Expert, Office of the NBTC, who delivered the remarks on behalf of Clinical Professor Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruck, Chairman of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand (NBTC) and Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau.

### 13. Conclusion

The ITU Regional Development Forum for Asia and the Pacific (RDF-ASP) 2026 reaffirmed the region's collective commitment to advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025 (WTDC-25) and the Baku Action Plan through strengthened cooperation, innovation and partnership. Participants emphasized that the five Asia-Pacific Regional Initiatives provide a practical framework for addressing the diverse needs of the region, particularly those of least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries. The Forum underscored that achieving universal and meaningful connectivity requires sustained investment and commitments in accelerating resilient digital infrastructure, enabling policy and regulatory environments taking into account the growing importance of emerging technologies (in particular artificial intelligence), digital skills development, promoting appropriate, cybersecurity frameworks, and inclusive access to affordable digital services. Participants recognized meaningful connectivity as a critical foundation for social and economic development, enabling individuals, communities and businesses to fully benefit from digital opportunities and accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum further highlighted that sustainable digital transformation can only be achieved through strong multistakeholder collaboration and coordinated action among governments, industry, development partners, financial institutions, academia, the United Nations system and civil society, and called upon ITU to facilitate

and strengthen such partnerships. Participants welcomed the growing momentum of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition as a catalyst for mobilizing resources, fostering innovation and translating commitments into concrete projects and measurable impact across Asia and the Pacific. Through new partnerships, project announcements and Partner2Connect matchmaking discussions, stakeholders demonstrated a shared determination to expand digital inclusion, strengthen resilience, promote emerging technologies for development, and ensure that no community is left behind in the digital era. RDF-ASP 2026 concluded with a renewed call for all stakeholders to accelerate implementation of regional initiatives, scale successful partnerships, and work together towards a connected, inclusive, secure and sustainable digital future for every person in Asia and the Pacific.

## Annex 1: RDF-ASP 2026 Programme

The RDF-ASP 2026 Programme is available here.

## Annex 2: List of Contributions Submitted

| No | Countries/Entities | Contribution Title |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Global Plan Inc | AI-Grade Connectivity as a Foundation for National Development: Lessons from BIRD Initiative |
| 2 | Eocean Private Limited (Pakistan) | AI-Powered Communication Infrastructure for Inclusive Digital Transformation |
| 3 | Kistpay Private Limited, Pakistan | Advancing Meaningful Connectivity Through Smartphone Affordability and AI-Enabled Financial Inclusion |
| 4 | Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom, Pakistan | Fostering an Inclusive Digital Ecosystem: Lessons from Pakistan’s "Smart Village" Model for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity |
| 5 | Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), Republic of Korea | Bringing Capacity Building Efforts: Interregional Training Course on ITU International Standards |
| 6 | World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) | AI-Powered Identification of Illegal Wildlife Products with Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Systems: |
| 7 | World Wide Fund for Nature WWF | From Algorithms to Action: Disrupting Wildlife Trafficking in Maritime Supply Chains - An Innovative Technology Solution for Detecting Undeclared and Misdeclared Wildlife Products in Cargo Bookings |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | World Wide Fund For Nature | Smart Wetland Management Project (SWMP) |
| 9 | World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) | Zoonotic Risk Predictor Machine Learning System in Mekong region. |
| 10 | World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) | WWF-Singapore Cyber Spotter Programme Illegal Wildlife Trade Machine Learning System |
| 11 | APNIC Foundation | Driving Digital Transformation |
| 12 | Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) | Advancing Universal Acceptance for a Multilingual Internet |
| 13 | Seisa University, Yokohama, Japan | Introduction of ITU-D SG2 Q1/2(Enabling telecommunications/ICTs for digital transformation and smart sustainable cities and communities) to activities focused on the Asia Pacific region |
| 14 | Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), Malaysia | Building an Inclusive, Secure and Future-Ready Digital Economy through Capacity Development, Emerging Skills, and Targeted Fellowship and Scholarship Support |
| 15 | Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, India (IISc); Indian Institute of Information Technology, Bengaluru, India (IIITB); Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India (IITD);<br>Center for Development of Advanced Computing, India (CDAC); Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) | Democratising Technology: Using Open Standards and Open Source (in line with the WTDC-25 resolution 15, Applied Research and Transfer of Technology) |
| 16 | 5Rights Foundation, United Kingdom / Asia-Pacific regional (based in Thailand) | Child Rights by Design for a Safe, Inclusive and Responsible Digital Future in Asia and the Pacific |
| 17 | Association for Progressive Communications (APC) | From Recognition to Action: Empowering Community-Centred Connectivity Initiatives |
| 18 | Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) | AIBD’s Pledge to RDF-ASP - 2026 |
| 19 | Ministry of Science and Technology of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam | Regional Cooperation on AI-ready, IPv6-native and Resilient Digital Infrastructure for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity |