



Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

Office of the Minister

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High Level Statement by Papua New Guinea

World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25), Azerbaijan

Minister for Digital Development and Chairman of WTDC-25,
Secretary-General of the ITU,
Director BDT,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, I extend warm greetings to you all.

As highlighted by the **ITU Secretary-General** during the opening, meaningful connectivity remains our greatest opportunity and our greatest challenge. At the recent **APT Ministerial in Tokyo**, Papua New Guinea emphasised this same truth: **digital progress is only progress when it reaches our most remote communities**. As our Minister reminded us, “Growth that benefits only the cities and leaves rural communities behind is not progress; it is inequality in a new form.”

The Lagatoi – A Cultural Symbol for a Digital Pacific

Allow me to draw inspiration from a symbol deeply rooted in Papua New Guinea's **history the Lagatoi**, the double-hulled vessel of the Motu-Koita people. For centuries it carried our ancestors across vast oceans, linking villages, fostering trade, and connecting cultures. **Today it reminds us that digital connectivity is not just about technology; it is about linking people, opportunities, and futures.**

The Lagatoi Declaration – The Pacific's Digital Pathway

At the **54th Pacific Islands Leaders Forum**, our Leaders endorsed the Lagatoi Declaration, founded on four pillars:

- Climate-resilient digital infrastructure,
- Inclusive and accessible digital transformation,
- A safer and trusted cyber environment, and
- Stronger regional collaboration.

These pillars form the Pacific's pathway to closing the missing link in our region the persistent digital divide. This is why the APT has submitted a contribution proposing a **new WTDC-25 Resolution on the Lagatoi Declaration.** We ask for your support so that the Pacific's priorities are recognised in global ICT development.

Our case is not unique. Africa's remarkable progress from harmonised regional frameworks to large-scale cross-border fibre corridors shows the power of unity. The Pacific can achieve similar transformation by moving together, guided by the Lagatoi.

Girls in ICT – Building Tomorrow's Workforce

Papua New Guinea continues to invest in digital skills through the Girls in ICT initiative, including a tertiary program supporting more than 30 young women in ICT fields. We warmly acknowledge the Government of Australia for the Georgina Kiele Scholarship for Women in Cybersecurity, honouring a pioneer of PNG's ICT sector and empowering the next generation of Pacific women leaders.

Conclusion

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, the Pacific stands ready, but we cannot sail this journey alone.

We respectfully seek the support of WTDC-25 members to advance the **new resolution on Lagatoi Declaration and to strengthen the Pacific's connectivity and cybersecurity foundations.**

As the Lagatoi once carried our ancestors across vast seas, let it now carry our shared ambitions across the digital horizon.

Together, **let us build a Smart Pacific One Voice, One Network, One Future**

Thank you

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Head of Delegation

Independent State of Papua New Guinea