

Welcome and Cooperation with ITU

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a great honor to welcome you to Baku for the **World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025**. Azerbaijan is proud to be the **first country** in our region to host this landmark global event — a responsibility we embrace with determination and optimism.
2. Our partnership with the **International Telecommunication Union** spans more than three decades. Since joining in 1992, we have built a record of practical cooperation — from ICT statistics and digital-skills projects to award-winning e-government services recognized by the World Summit on the Information Society (**WSIS**) **Prizes**. Most recently, Azerbaijan co-hosted the **Green Digital Action** initiative at COP29, endorsed by 83 nations.
3. Hosting WTDC-25 reflects our long-standing engagement with ITU and our shared mission of advancing digital inclusion.

Digital Transformation as a National Priority

4. Digital transformation lies at the core of **President Ilham Aliyev's "Azerbaijan 2030" Vision**, positioning ICT as a driver of non-oil growth.
5. As the body responsible for implementing this vision, the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport has dedicated the past five years to mobilizing its full resources and expertise toward achieving this goal.
 - a. Through the **myGov platform**, citizens now access nearly 400 digital services, and the upcoming **myGov Business Portal** will provide companies with one-window access to all government functions.
 - b. The **SİMA biometric signature**, serving over three million users, allows remote authentication across 80+ state systems.
 - c. As a result, Azerbaijan achieved **"Very High" status** in the 2024 **UN E-Government Development Index**.
6. But our focus extends beyond digital government. The **AI revolution** defines the next chapter. Our **National AI Strategy 2025-2028** aims to build an AI-ready economy. We have launched an **AI Academy** with leading partners and are developing the **first Large Language Model for the Azerbaijani language**, powered by **NVIDIA GPUs** at the **AZCON Cloud Center**.

7. Parallel to this, we strengthen **cybersecurity**. The **Azerbaijan Cybersecurity Center**, established with Israel's Technion Institute, has already trained hundreds of specialists, while our new **National SOC and CERT** will safeguard digital trust — the foundation of a digital economy.

Smart Governance and Regional Connectivity

8. We also recognize that the true value of technology lies in its application, and therefore we integrate it into our daily decision-making and policy-making processes.
 - a. The **Digital Twin of Baku** now guides evidence-based urban planning, allowing us to model infrastructure and mobility before investments are made.
 - b. Similarly, we apply digitalization to transform cross-border logistics. Together with Türkiye, Azerbaijan is piloting an **e-CMR digital freight system**, eliminating paper delays and aligning with UN/CEFACT standards. As **President of the International Transport Forum**, Azerbaijan promotes the fusion of **physical and digital infrastructure** across the **Middle Corridor**, connecting continents through smart connectivity.

Bridging the Global Digital Divide

9. WTDC-25's theme — *"Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future"* — demands both ambition and action. With **2.6 billion people** still offline, the gap is a challenge of political will.
10. Domestically, Azerbaijan now enjoys **nationwide broadband coverage**, with speeds increasing sevenfold from 12 mbps to 84 mbps.
11. Regionally, the **Digital Silk Way** project is building a **400 Tbps Eurasian corridor**, linking Europe and Asia through high-capacity, low-latency connectivity.

Regional Cooperation and the Path Forward

12. Azerbaijan believes in cooperation through dialogue. ITU's facilitation recently enabled **technical coordination between Azerbaijan and Armenia**, leading to the

mutual withdrawal of broadcasting objections — a reminder that technology can bridge divides.

13. During WTDC-25, we will inaugurate a **Regional Acceleration Center**, connecting startups and innovators with global mentorship and financing through ITU's ecosystem.

Closing

14. Over the next twelve days, we will define ITU's development priorities for 2026–2029. The choices we make here will determine whether a young woman in a remote village can study online or whether a small business can reach the global market.
15. Azerbaijan's experience shows that when vision meets commitment, digital transformation becomes real. Let us work together to ensure that **universal connectivity** is not a distant aspiration but a shared achievement.

Welcome to **Baku**, and welcome to **WTDC-25**.

Thank you.