



## **BDT COMMUNIQUÉ**

# **Trends, opportunities and challenges for digital development discussed at Regional Development Forum for CIS Region**

**Astana, 27 March 2024**

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Commonwealth of Independent States (RDF-CIS), held from 26-27 March 2024 in Astana, Kazakhstan, welcomed over 105 participants from 10 countries, to identify ways to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region through digital transformation.

Hosted by the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, RDF-CIS provided an opportunity for ITU and stakeholders in the region to exchange views on how to achieve universal, affordable, and meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

“We are working towards positioning our country as a regional digital hub. For this purpose, we have numerous projects. We are always open and ready to support effective and practical proposals that create favorable and quality living conditions for the people of our countries. Together, we can overcome challenges and realize the potential of digital technologies in our region,” said H.E. Minister Bagdat Mussin, Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

RDF-CIS welcomed regional stakeholders and decision-makers including Ministers involved in digital development and digital transformation with aim of forging multi-stakeholder partnerships.

“The RDF-CIS represents a convergence of like-minded individuals and entities sharing a common vision, driven by the pursuit of tangible outcomes,” said Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau. “Digital technology presents vast opportunities to rapidly advance the Sustainable Development Agenda. The RDF-CIS helps chart a course for its future, seeking solutions and forging partnerships that will lead us toward a brighter, digitally enabled tomorrow.”

The Forum reported on the status of implementation of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22) held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022 outcomes. This included reports on the ongoing implementation of the Kigali Action Plan and the Regional Initiatives, which encompass digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital skills and accessibility, digital regulation and smart cities.

The Forum gave regional decision-makers and stakeholders an opportunity to discuss priority issues for digital development and transformation in the region, implementation plans in countries, announcement of financial and in-kind commitments to operationalize

announced pledges for projects implementation, and provide a platform for the exchange of experiences and good practices.

“The Regional Initiatives reflect priorities and challenges that guide our work in the region. RDF-CIS is an important opportunity for ITU-D Members to voice opinions, share ideas and partner. I look forward to supporting the implementation of the outcomes of the meeting.” said Natalia Mochu, Regional Director for the ITU CIS Regional Office.

### **Partner2Connect Matchmaking Roundtables**

The Partner2Connect (P2C) Matchmaking Roundtables allowed participants to review and report on the implementation of announced pledges and committed to match country and regional needs with concrete solutions. The roundtables discussed and identified effective mechanisms to coordinate and collaborate for better and optimal use of resources that will bring high impact and sustainable development in the CIS region and beyond. Highlights from the Regional Partner2Connect Roundtables matchmaking sessions include:

**Huawei** made a commitment to support 90 young visionaries in their digital inclusion projects; as well as to bring connectivity to about 120 million people in remote areas globally, including the CIS region, by 2025; **NITEC** committed to implement the GovStack program in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan; **ZTE** committed to build \$400 million per year worth of ICT infrastructure globally by 2025; **GSMA** committed to train policymakers and regulators in new technologies as well as for Early Warnings for All Initiative, ensuring universal protection by 2027. Leveraging mobile tech like cell-broadcast and location-based SMS, it aims to deliver targeted, accessible information to communities.

**RIPE NCC** committed to achieve connectivity and ensure Internet sustainability in Europe, Middle East and Central Asia; **Kaspersky Lab KZ** committed to organize free masterclasses for parents to enhance their capacity on safe use of the Internet and digital products for children in Kazakhstan; the **Belarusian State Academy of Communication (BSAC)** committed to implement its work on methodologies for teaching digital skills to persons with disabilities and to improve digital literacy of civil servants as a driver for the development of smart cities in all CIS countries; the **Eurasian National University** committed to the formation of scientific and educational landscape of digital economy and to the development and harmonization of sign language for the countries of the Organization of Turkic States and Eurasian Economic Union; **CAICT** committed to promoting barrier-free ICT Accessibility and helping bridge the digital divide for the elderly and the disabled in CIS Region.

At the Forum, new Partner2Connect pledges were also announced. Here is a snapshot:

**Kostanay Engineering and Economics University named after M.Dulatov (KEEU)** committed to help create a smart education ecosystem in Kostanay; **IT-Academy** committed to implement its Child Online Protection Global Program for Uzbekistan; the **Ministry of Digital Development and Transport** of Azerbaijan made five additional commitments related to: a. the development of advanced radio technologies; b. digital upskilling; c. GIS electronic management system of public telecommunications networks; d. capacity building on data protection; e. building a test laboratory of radio equipment in Azerbaijan; the **Institute of Smart Systems and Artificial Intelligence** committed to stimulate the development of assistive mobile applications to assist visually impaired persons through the use of publicly available source code, pre-trained models, and UI for interaction with Chat

GPT; the **Union of Operators of Armenia** committed to establishing robust infrastructure to facilitate connectivity for over 600 households in Armenia.

Detailed information on the matchmaking sessions and new pledges will be featured in the official report of the Regional Development Forum for CIS Region to be posted on the Forum's website by 10 April 2024.

### **New partnerships and announcements**

The Regional Development Forum provided an opportunity for special announcements:

- A Framework Cooperation Agreement between ITU and the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications for implementation of projects within the framework of the regional initiatives of the World Telecommunication Development Conference was signed.
- The cooperation between ITU, the Eurasian Development Bank and “National Information Technologies” JSC (Kazakhstan) on the GovStack regional project for Central Asia and Caucasus countries was announced.
- A joint declaration between ITU and the Kostanay Engineering and Economics University named after M.Dulatov (KEUEU) regarding Smart Kostanay Education Ecosystem 2.0 to cooperate and collaborate in areas of common interest, including, telecom networks and infrastructure, cybersecurity and digital skills was signed.

### **Resources and background information:**

- [RDF-CIS website](#)
- [RDF-CIS photos](#)
- [Highlights video](#)

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### **For questions, please contact:**

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### **About the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

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