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**(Draft) SINGAPORE STATEMENT**

**OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC ICT MINISTERS ON**

**CO-CREATING A DIGITAL FUTURE THROUGH CONNECTIVITY**

**IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

**We**, the Ministers responsible for telecommunications/Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Asia-Pacific region, have gathered in Singapore on 25th and 26th of June 2019 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and to discuss our joint efforts to further strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration in the field of telecommunications/ ICT.

**We acknowledge** the commitments made by our leaders at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 to harness the power of telecommunications/ICT so that everyone can access, create, share and utilise information and knowledge, as well as the commitments made by our leaders to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

**We also acknowledge** the strategic goals of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which facilitate the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which have been adopted by the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2018.

**We commend** the review and effective implementation of the Brunei Darussalam Statement and the initiatives, contributions and the substantial achievements that have been made by the APT and its Member countries to achieve the Statement’s objective of building smart digital economies through telecommunications/ICT.

**We note with satisfaction** that the Asia-Pacific region has made good progress in broadband infrastructure and services development, particularly on 5G trial services which have been launched in several Member countries, and the APT’s continuous support to its Member countries in building telecommunications/ICT capabilities and connectivity, as well as bridging the digital divide which has resulted in sustainable telecommunications/ICT growth.

**We recognise** that there remains opportunities for improvement in telecommunications/ICT development in the Asia-Pacific region, including to further strengthen telecommunications/ICT connectivity and access, to support sustainable development and to harness the benefits of the digital economy.

**We also recognise** that the availability of broadband infrastructure, mobile communications, and the internet and its myriad applications, have a great impact on the lives of the people and the socio-economic development of the region.

**We are aware** that the rapidly evolving telecommunications/ICT environment creates opportunities and challenges, including in relation to disruptive innovations and emerging technologies.

**We affirm** the importance of developing a safe and trusted telecommunications/ICT enabling environment so as to further spur innovation and the use of telecommunications/ICT.

**We believe** in the potential of the Asia-Pacific region in leading the use of telecommunications/ ICT to advance the digitalisation of the economy and to achieve sustainable development.

**We are determined** to further strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration to facilitate the development of a conducive policy and regulatory environment that will encourage innovation and help promote an open and competitive economy.

**We are committed** to enhancing telecommunications/ICT connectivity and access and the social, economic and environmental benefits they provide, through advancing the development of infrastructure, innovative services, and digital skills and literacy.

**We hereby resolve** to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, including to co-create a connected digital future in the Asia Pacific region where there will be seamless and pervasive telecommunications/ICT connectivity, coupled with a safe and trusted environment that enables businesses to thrive and innovate in the digital economy, and provides all citizens with the skills and knowledge to harness the benefits of the digital future. This vision shall be achieved through implementing the following five Strategic Goals and their respective priority areas.

***A. Digital Transformation***

We aim to provide an enabling environment for telecommunications/ICT development through improved telecommunications/ICT connectivity and access for citizens and businesses so as to accelerate the digital transformation of the economy and society, which will in turn contribute to socio-economic growth, innovation and better delivery of public services. In order to facilitate digital transformation, we will:

1. **Policies and Regulations.** Promote the development and adoption of policies and regulations that facilitate greater connectivity, digitalisation, transparency, market competition and access, consumer protection and the development of innovative technologies and services, as well as strengthen regional coordination to support cross-border connectivity and the growth of the digital economy in this region;
2. **Digital Connectivity.** Make our best efforts to provide affordable, reliable, sustainable and high quality telecommunications/ICT and broadband connectivity to all citizens, particularly to the unserved and underserved areas in our respective countries, and to encourage and facilitate regional and international connectivity by way of establishing high capacity and sustainable broadband terrestrial and submarine cables, as well as satellite services, where appropriate;
3. **Digital Government.** Promote the development of national digital government policies, strategies, practices and activities, in collaboration with all relevant sectors, further enhance the accessibility and delivery of e-services to citizens, which will in turn support the digital transformation of both the public and private sectors as well as the development of the digital economy;
4. **Platforms and Enablers**: Promote the development of platforms and enablers to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies and services by citizens and businesses in building a more connected and inclusive digital community as well as develop a trusted digital ecosystem through key enablers such as digital identity, which will in turn contribute to the growth of the digital economy.

***B. Digital Innovation and Creativity***

We aim to create an environment which is conducive for digital innovation and creativity, by introducing policies and frameworks that encourage emerging technologies, -accelerate the growth of digital entrepreneurship, and promote international standards on telecommunications/ICT. In order to facilitate digital innovation and creativity, we will:

1. **Innovation, Entrepreneurship and MSMEs.** Promote policies and initiatives to bolster telecommunications/ICT-centric innovation, entrepreneurship and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs, facilitating easy access to public platforms and public data, as well as facilitating networking and scaling up among local and regional stakeholders;
2. **Emerging ICT and Smart Communities.** Encourage the development of enabling environments for emerging ICT to support the digital transformation of the economy toward smart community, while ensuring interoperability and compatibility as necessary, through the adoption of appropriate technological policies, regulations and guidelines and sharing best practices and ideas on utilisation of emerging ICT and relevant capacity building.;
3. **5G.** Encourage the development of policies and enabling environments to embrace the new ecosystem brought by 5G (IMT-2020), with the aim of optimising the use of spectrum, including farming out 2G/3G spectrum, identifying additional frequency bands for 5G, and progress towards 5G deployment which has the potential to produce far-reaching economic benefits, as well as enabling new services and products which rely on faster and higher capacity data transmission with low latency;
4. **Technologies and Standards.** Provide assistance in adopting international standards by providing relevant guidelines or implementation specifications, where applicable. Special initiatives should be taken into account to bridge the innovation gap that exists between least developing countries, developing countries and developed countries in the region.

***C. Digital Community***

We aim to make telecommunications/ICT accessible to everyone in our communities, including in the unserved and underserved geographical regions and people from vulnerable groups, to build an inclusive community regardless of diversity, through inclusive policies and the development of reliable telecommunications/ICT infrastructure. In order to achieve widespread digital adoption and ensure that the benefits of ICT are harnessed for all, we will:

1. **Expand Access.** Promote the expansion of telecommunications/ICT infrastructure to connect all members of our communities through collaborative projects with holistic approach for extending connectivity, coverage and applications to remote and rural areas, and encourage green technology solutions for development of ICT infrastructure;
2. **Digital Inclusion.** Encourage the development of national digital inclusion policies, strategies, practices and activities, and provide assistance and share experiences, taking into account that telecommunications/ICT can be harnessed to bridge the digital divide, promote gender equality and contribute to sustainable development. It is crucial to promote widespread digital adoption through providing access to telecommunications/ICT for all citizens, especially for ethnic minority, people living in remote areas, seniors, youths and persons with disabilities and specific needs, so that they can participate and contribute in the digital economy and society;
3. **Financial Inclusion through ICT.** Share best practices to promote financial inclusion through leveraging the power of telecommunications/ICT by facilitating electronic payments, use of digital identity and creating security infrastructure and access to transaction accounts, enabling the participation of all citizens in the digital economy;
4. **Local Content and Applications.** Encourage the promotion and development of telecommunications/ICT-centric content and applications in local and ethic languages and contexts to facilitate active participation by all citizens which is essential in the digital economy and society, while taking into consideration the need to preserve a multi-cultural environment and respecting different cultural values.

***D. Digital Trust***

We aim to establish trusted and secured systems which promotes the protection of data privacy, facilitates data free flow with trust, and is resilient towards cyber threats, so that people can engage in online activities with confidence and openly share information online. In order to promote increased cybersecurity vigilance and foster a trusted and secure cyberspace, we will:

1. **Data Privacy and Data Free Flow with Trust.** Promote the development of policies and regulations on data privacy and regulatory environments, where required, to facilitate the free and secure flow of information in the region while recognising existing international frameworks for data privacy and legitimate public policy considerations;
2. **Cybersecurity.** Strengthen the human and institutional capacity to respond to threats in cyberspace or to critical information infrastructures, develop and implement national laws, policies and measures, and enhance collaboration in the region, including sharing best practices of national initiatives and experiences in operating national CERTs/ CSIRTs, promoting awareness and developing standards on cybersecurity;
3. **Online Safety and Wellbeing.** Promote and enhance policies, regulations and strategies, and support initiatives to promote the online safety and wellbeing of citizens, with special considerations given to citizens who may be particularly vulnerable such as women, young people and persons with disabilities and specific needs, and to address issues such as cyberbullying and the dissemination of inappropriate or illegal content;
4. **Resilience and Disaster Management.** Promote policies and strategies for sustainable, reliable and resilient telecommunications/ICT infrastructure and services to secure their availability, including during disasters, and to support all phases of disaster management, including dissemination of information to assist public safety, health and disaster-relief efforts.

***E. Digital Skills and Partnerships***

We aim to build the digital literacy and skills of all citizens so that they will be well-equipped to work collaboratively, both within the telecommunications/ICT sector as well as across other sectors, towards co-creating a connected digital future in the region. In order to build up digital skills and partnerships, we will:

1. **Capacity Building for the Future.** Enhance and expand human resource capacity, including technical talent and institutions with digital skills for the future society and to mitigate the undesirable social and economic consequences of loss of conventional employment, and supporting sustainable development;
2. **ICT in Other Sectors.** Support other sectors, upon request, such as agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, health, education etc., in understanding the opportunities that telecommunications/ICT-centric products and services provide with respect to improving efficiencies, achieving sustainability, and alleviating inherent constraints for inclusive development;
3. **Multi-stakeholder ecosystem.** Promote an inclusive multi-stakeholder ecosystem, comprising governments, business and academia who will, in their respective roles, promote the development and deployment of telecommunications/ICT-centric products and services to foster sustainable development;
4. **Regional Collaboration.** Encourage the APT to enhance collaboration and cooperation with the relevant international, regional and multilateral organisations to promote a development agenda focussed on enhancing telecommunications/ICT services and infrastructure in the region, including through promoting technology standardisation and interoperability, spectrum management cooperation and emergency communications.

**We welcome** valuable inputs and contributions from all stakeholders including public and private sectors, regional and international communities, academic and research institutions, and civil society to work together to achieve these priorities through actions at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

**We encourage** the APT to implement these initiatives which will bring us towards our common vision of co-creating a connected digital future in the Asia-Pacific and to cooperate closely with other relevant regional and international organisations. Bearing in mind the need to realise the benefits to Member countries, as well as the need for efficiency, relevance and accountability to achieve our Strategic Goals, we will closely review and follow up on the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Goals.

**We reaffirm** our commitment to collectively work towards strengthening telecommunications/ ICT development and connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region so as to promote the digital economy, achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life of our people.

**We also reaffirm** our commitment and support to the APT in co-creating a connected digital future in the Asia-Pacific where there will be seamless and pervasive telecommunications/ICT connectivity, coupled with a safe and trusted environment that enables businesses to thrive and innovate in the digital economy, and provides all citizens with the skills and knowledge to harness the benefits of the digital future. We will continue to assist the APT in moving forward and dynamically respond to the emerging needs of the Asia-Pacific region.

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