



**SINGAPORE STATEMENT
OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC ICT MINISTERS ON
CO-CREATING A CONNECTED DIGITAL FUTURE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

We, the Ministers responsible for telecommunication/Information and Communication 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 telecommunication/ICT.

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

We acknowledge the continued efforts of the APT in enhancing close cooperation in the region to consolidate regional views on ICT issues, including the preparation for International Telecommunication Union (ITU) conferences and assemblies;

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

We note with satisfaction that the Asia-Pacific region has made good progress in broadband infrastructure and services development, such as 5G, and the APT's continuous support to its Members in building telecommunication/ICT capabilities and connectivity and promoting innovative services and applications. This has contributed to sustainable telecommunication/ICT growth and bridging the digital divide.

We recognise that there remain opportunities for improvement in telecommunication/ICT development in the Asia-Pacific region to support sustainable development and to harness the benefits of the digital economy, including for APT Members to further strengthen their telecommunication/ICT connectivity and access, as well as to promote innovative ICT services.

We also recognise that the availability and future development 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 telecommunication/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 telecommunication/ICT enabling environment so as to further spur innovation and the use of telecommunication/ICT.

We believe in the potential of the Asia-Pacific region in leading the use of telecommunication/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 telecommunication/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 affordable, available, and sustainable telecommunication/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 telecommunication/ICT development through improved telecommunication/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.** Endeavour to provide affordable, available, and sustainable telecommunication/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 and note that the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), continue to need further support in this regard;
- 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, interoperability, and adoption of platforms and enablers to accelerate greater take-up of digital technologies and services by governments, businesses, and citizens in building more connected and inclusive digital communities, contributing 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 telecommunication/ICT. In order to facilitate digital innovation and creativity, we will:

- 1. Innovation, Entrepreneurship and MSMEs.** Promote policies and initiatives to bolster telecommunication/ICT-centric innovation, entrepreneurship and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs, facilitating access to public platforms and public data, as well as facilitating networking and scaling up among local and regional stakeholders;
- 2. Emerging ICTs and Smart Communities.** Encourage the development of enabling environments for emerging ICTs, including Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), to support the digital transformation of the economy towards smart communities, 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 ICTs 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 infrastructure and spectrum, including re-farming 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 and massive connectivity;
- 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 LDCs, developing countries, and developed countries in the region.

C. Digital Community

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

- 1. Expand Access.** Promote the expansion of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure to connect all members of our communities through collaborative projects with a holistic approach for extending connectivity, coverage, and applications to remote and rural areas, and encourage green technology solutions for the 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 telecommunication/ICT can be harnessed to bridge digital divides, promote gender equalities and contribute to sustainable development. It is crucial to promote widespread digital adoption by providing access to telecommunication/ICT for

all citizens, especially for vulnerable groups, so that they can participate and contribute to the digital economy and society;

3. **Financial Inclusion through ICTs.** Share best practices to promote financial inclusion through leveraging the power of telecommunication/ICT by facilitating electronic payments, using 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 telecommunication/ICT-centric content and applications in local and ethnic 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 encourage trusted and secured systems which promote the protection of data privacy, facilitate free and secure flow of information, and are 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, Free and Secure Flow of Information.** 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 Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)/ Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), and promoting awareness of and cooperation in the development of international standards on cybersecurity;
3. **Online Safety and Well-being.** Promote and enhance policies, regulations and strategies, and support initiatives to promote the online safety and well-being of citizens, with special considerations given to gender equality and to citizens who may be particularly vulnerable, 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 telecommunication/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 Capacity Building 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 telecommunication/ICT sector as well as across other

sectors, towards co-creating a connected digital future in the region. Towards the aim of digital capacity building and partnerships, we will:

1. **Skills for the Future.** Enhance and expand human resource capacity, including technical talent and institutions with digital skills for the future society for purposes including mitigating the undesirable social and economic consequences of loss of conventional employment, and supporting sustainable development;
2. **ICTs in Other Sectors.** Support other sectors, upon request, such as agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, health, education, etc. in understanding the opportunities that telecommunication/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 government, businesses, academia, and other stakeholders (including civil society), who will, in their respective roles, promote the development and deployment of telecommunication/ICT-centric products and services to foster sustainable development;
4. **Regional and International Collaboration.** Strengthen regional cooperation and information sharing among APT Members in areas of common interest, and encourage the APT to strengthen collaboration and cooperation with relevant stakeholders to promote a development agenda focused on enhancing telecommunication/ICT services and infrastructure in the region, including through promoting technology standardisation and interoperability, spectrum management cooperation, emergency communications, and studies relating to developments in existing and future network technology.

We welcome valuable inputs and contributions from all stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, regional and international communities, academic and research institutions, and other stakeholders (including 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 Members, 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 recognise the different development stages amongst APT Members, thus while the implementation timeline of the Statement may vary, the elaboration of the policy framework is valid for all APT Members.

We reaffirm our commitment to collectively work towards strengthening telecommunication/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 affordable, available, and sustainable telecommunication/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.
