



Secretary General

WELCOME ADDRESS

H.E. Mr. Karma Donnen Wangdi, Minister for Information and Communications, Royal Government of Bhutan

Mr. Md. Rezaul Quader, Chairman of the APT Policy and Regulatory Forum,

Ms. Mina Seonmin Jun, Mr. Charles Chew and Mrs. Tharalika Livera, Vice-Chairmen of the APT Policy and Regulatory Forum,

Mr. Jigme Tenzing, Director, Department of Information Technology and Telecom, Ministry of Information and Communications, Bhutan,

Distinguished guests, speakers and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 19th APT Policy and Regulatory Forum (PRF-19) here in Thimphu, the beautiful capital city of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

First and foremost, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and all delegations to this forum, I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Minister for Information and Communications, the Royal Government of Bhutan, Mr. Karma Donnen Wangdi, for presiding over the opening ceremony of this Forum.

May I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Information and Communications of Bhutan, in particular, the Department of Information Technology and Telecom, for hosting this important event of the APT.

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year is the 19th year of the PRF after its debut in the year 2001. The PRF is one of the premier annual events of the APT attended by the high-level and senior officials from the Ministries and the Regulatory authorities to converse on policy and regulatory issues that are of key priorities to the region. It also provides opportunities for the industry to dialogue and reflect various issues of their concern to the attention of the policy makers and regulators.

From time to time, PRF has also contributed to the preparation of the Asia-Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting, which has been scheduled to be organized every five years. Last year, the PRF-18 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, had started the preparation for the Asia-Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting 2019.

This year, the APT celebrates the 40th Anniversary of its establishment. All work programmes of the APT in this year including this PRF-19 join the celebration.

The Asia-Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting 2019, which was held from 25 to 26 June in Singapore, was the highlight of the commemoration for the 40th Anniversary of the APT. Ministers from 32 APT Member countries and Associate Members adopted the Singapore Statement on Co-Creating Connected Digital Future in the Asia-Pacific.

The Singapore Statement provides strategic guidance and the pathways to the development of telecommunication/ICT in the Asia-Pacific region for the next five years. It will provide basis for preparation of the Strategic Plan of the APT for 2021-2023 to be adopted by the General Assembly of the APT next year.

Distinguished delegates,

This PRF-19 is scheduled to be held after the Ministerial Meeting in order to take the opportunity to recap and follow up the discussion at the Ministerial Meeting and the new Ministerial Meeting.

A Roundtable on Singapore Statement and its key takeaways is a special session where high-level officials from the APT Members are invited to address the implication and key takeaways for the Singapore Statement as adopted at APT-MM 2019.

Thematic sessions of the PRF-19 continue to focus on the five Strategic Pillars of the current Strategic Plan of the APT for 2018-2020. At the same time, the priority areas of the five Strategic Goals of the Singapore Statement are also taken into account.

In terms of Connectivity pillar of the Strategic Plan, broadband connectivity and access are important issues for the APT Members. The 42nd Session of the Management Committee of the APT held last year in Mongolia approved Thailand's proposal to share achievements, challenges, lesson learnt regarding the connectivity initiatives for unserved and underserved and launch the report on its Initiative "Net Pracharat" as best practice in the region.

For the Innovation pillar, there has been advancement in technologies such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Internet of Things (IoT). Industry will share their perspective and discuss on the latest trend of telecom services arisen from fusion of those technologies, regulatory challenges, and what industry contribute towards a connected digital future in the Asia-Pacific. We will also discuss the update of 5G service scenarios and readiness of the APT Members for 5G deployment in terms of policy and regulatory issues, national action plan, and spectrum issues. The forum will also discuss initiative, technology, and success story on implementation of national digital ID.

The spread of the basic ICT skills and digital literacy are required to promote widespread digital adoption through providing access to telecommunications/ICT. The forum will share experiences regarding the national digital inclusion policies, strategies, practices, and activities.

The Internet is the key enabler for productivity and innovation in the Digital Economy and Trust has become an important issue. We will also address issue on cross-border transfers of personal data as well as online-safety and well-being of citizens.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

With these few words, let me once again express my sincere gratefulness to His Excellency Karma Donnen Wangdi, Minister of Information and Communications, Bhutan for being with us today, and to our host, the Ministry of Information and Communications of Bhutan and the Department of Information Technology and Telecom for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangement. I am also thankful to all staff involved in organizing the forum, for their hard work in the coordination and preparation.

Last but not least, my special thanks to all panelists, speakers and participants. This forum could not have been made possible without your valuable contributions.

I wish you all fruitful days of discussion and enjoy your time in Bhutan.

Thank you very much.