



Secretary General

WELCOME ADDRESS

H.E. Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan,
Mr. Amir Azeem Bajwa, Chairman of Pakistan Telecommunications Authority and Chairman
of the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council,
Mr. Jigme Wangdi, Director of Bhutan InfoComm & Media Authority, Bhutan,
Distinguished Members of the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council,
Distinguished speakers, guests and delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you to the 20th Meeting of the South Asian
Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC-20) here in Paro, Bhutan.

First of all, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and all delegates, I would like
to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Lyonpo Loknath Sharma,
Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan for kindly accepting to inaugurate
the opening ceremony of this SATRC-20.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Bhutan InfoComm & Media
Authority (BICMA) for hosting this meeting and making all the excellent arrangements.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last December, the 19th Meeting of SATRC was held in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Meeting
agreed to elect the Chairman of Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) as the Chairman
of the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council. Then, after the Government of
Pakistan had appointed Mr. Amir Azeem Bajwa the new Chairman of PTA, I had an honour to
inform all members of SATRC of his appointment seeking the endorsement of his chairmanship
as the Chairman of SATRC. All Members of SATRC kindly informed the the APT Secretariat
the full support of the SATRC chairmanship of Mr. Bajwa.

However, I would like to inform the meeting that Mr. Bajwa is unable to participate in this
SATRC-20 Meeting due to an unfortunate and sudden medical situation. The doctors have
advised bed rest and strictly no travel to him. [I wish Mr. Bajwa a speedy and full recovery.]

Excellency,
Ladies and gentlemen,

SATRC has been an important sub-regional programme of the APT since its establishment in 1997. It has become a platform for regulators from nine South Asian countries to discuss and cooperate on important telecommunications and ICT related issues in the South Asian region.

The existence of many varieties of economies in region has made the region very much challenging in terms of the deployment of the new technologies and services. Broadband access, especially access using mobile devices have increased and changed the business scenario. The issues include unpredictability of licence renewal, equitable access to the scarce resources like spectrum and taxation in the services, potential of 5G, IoT and AI, etc. Those new innovations are bringing immense challenges for policy makers and regulators. These issues must be addressed at the regional platform like SATRC.

The activities of SATRC have been conducted through different phases of SATRC Action Plans. To date, we have completed six phases of SATRC Action Plan and their outputs of each Work Item are available on the APT website.

It is worth to mention that all activities that have been implemented to date recorded an overwhelming participation of SATRC Members. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all SATRC Members that had facilitating the implementation of the Action Plan by providing experts for the Working Groups, hosting various activities as well as for the contribution towards the Extra Budgetary Contribution (EBC) SATRC fund. This has made SATRC a unique sub-regional programme of the APT.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and the experts of the Working Groups for their excellent efforts in producing good outcomes and contributing to the work on a voluntary basis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year is the first year for the SATRC Action Plan Phase VII for the implementation period of 2019–2020. Two Working Group had been established to conduct the detailed work on selected work items decided by the Council and three capacity building workshops will be organized during the implementation period.

I am pleased to note the good progress of the work of the two Working Groups that had started including their physical meetings and electronically works.

For the meeting of SATRC-20 this year, the period of the meeting is for 2 days. There will be Regulators' Roundtable sessions among the Council's members, the Head of Regulators of SATRC, to exchange views and share experience on the role of telecommunication regulators. The discussion will also focus on the role of regulator to attract and sustain investments for innovation, entrepreneurship and employment generation as well as Digital Financial Services.

There will be a session of the Regulator–Industry Dialogue where the telecom regulators and industry will share and discuss how to prepare for new technologies and services and improve the quality of services for mobile networks. The best practices and regulatory experiences will also be exchanged among regulators and flowed by the Industry Session to exchange views on the recent industry developments. I hope all of you would have a very fruitful discussion on the subjects and share some initiatives taken within the SATRC region.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that this year APT celebrates the 40th Anniversary of its establishment. All work programmes of the APT in this year including this SATRC-20 would join the celebration.

The Asia-Pacific ICT Ministerial Meeting 2019 which was held from 25 to 26 July 2019 in Singapore was the highlight of the celebration. Ministers from 32 Members and Associate Members of the APT 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.

Fostering regional and international cooperation for co-creating a connected digital future in the Asia-Pacific is one of the important priority areas that were identified in the Singapore Statement. Regional cooperation in matters related to co-creating a connected digital future plays a key role in accelerating the economic growth in the region. To foster regional cooperation Asia-Pacific Ministers agreed to share best practices, skills, regulation and technologies to reduce the ICT development gap and to further develop ICT infrastructure so as to promote the innovative growth in the region.

SATRC activities, particularly the implementation of SATRC Action Plans provide a good mechanism for fostering cooperation in the region. There is also a scope for SATRC to review the Strategic Plan of the APT for 2018-2020 as well as the Singapore Statement to enhance the work of SATRC for greater collaboration.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like to once again express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan for being with us today, and also to our host, Bhutan InfoComm & Media Authority, for the excellent preparations and warm hospitality extended to all of us.

I wish you all a successful meeting and a happy stay in this beautiful city of Paro.

Thank you very much.
