

Working together in 2019: New Year's message from the ITU Secretary-General



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It is an honour for me to greet ITU's Japanese community via the ITU Association of Japan (ITU-AJ).

As a top ITU donor, a key contributor to ITU's technical work, and a global leader of connectivity initiatives for inclusive development, Japan is a particularly valued ITU partner.

Japan's industry, which includes many active, long-time Sector Members of ITU, has also been leading the way. In recent years, partnerships between the private sector and the Japan International Cooperation Agency have implemented innovative cooperative projects to use ICTs to drive development solutions in developing countries. For example, Fujitsu worked in Vietnam to use ICTs to improve the safety, productivity stable supply of agricultural products.

As countries use the power of ICTs to help accelerate progress towards the SDGs, I encourage them to follow Japan's example and focus their efforts on promoting infrastructure, investment, innovation and inclusivity.

Partnership is part of ITU's DNA. As the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technology (ICT), ITU relies on the collaboration of 193 Member States and over 800 industry, academic and other members to manage spectrum and satellite orbits, develop relevant global standards on communication technologies and services, and assist developing countries for infrastructure and policy development on ICTs so they can accelerate progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ITU's wide partnership is key to ensuring this work has global reach, relevance, and impact.

As 2018 draws to a close, I would like to reflect on a few of our collective achievements as a Union.

Together, we have made steady progress by leading the work on new innovations — bringing together stakeholders to ensure new technologies are green, efficient, secure, and cost-effective worldwide. And together, we have made important strides towards bridging digital divides so that everyone, everywhere, can benefit from the Internet and the vast resources it provides. So as we start to look forward to 2019 and beyond, I encourage our partners to continue working as team so that we can achieve success together.

Leading the work on new technologies

The world of technology is changing rapidly, and ITU is changing with it.

Now more than ever, ITU is working on how to provide better ICT services to the people and deliver on the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Over the last few years, ITU has been at the forefront of this revolution. We have been working on issues ranging from artificial intelligence, smart cities, and digital currency to the Internet of Things, new television, and 5G standards. And we have facilitated ICT infrastructure development.

As we look forward to a new year, ITU's World Radiocommunication Conference 2019 (WRC-19) will further address these demands by considering new allocations and identifications for 5G systems, High Altitude Platforms, and non-geostationary satellites systems. Consensus is being built in its preparation to make it a new success for our Union.

Partnering for ICTs for development

Despite the progress, however, about half the world's population remains unconnected and unable to benefit fully from the digital revolution.

That's why ITU is increasing its role as a key partner in development.

To achieve the SDGs, we are supporting Member States and other stakeholders to make broadband Internet accessible, affordable, and relevant to everyone.

ITU has convened a wide range of stakeholders to enable global harmonized regulations and standards leading to economies of scale and interoperability, which have led to a continued decline in the prices of ICT services and devices. Nearly 4.4 billion active mobile broadband subscriptions are expected worldwide by end 2018.

In addition, we are increasing our collaboration with sister UN agencies and others on important common projects, leveraging the power of ICT to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

In this effort, ITU has tackled issues ranging from digital literacy to health to financial inclusion. We can be proud of what we are doing with organizations like the Broadband Commission to promote infrastructure development, the International Labour Organization to train tomorrow's workforce, and UN Women to bridge the digital gender divide with initiatives such as EQUALS.

Building skills and creating opportunities for progress and prosperity

ITU is also leading the way to build ICT skills to help young people and others capitalize on the job opportunities of the digital era.

This year, ITU, UN Women, and the African Union launched a new initiative to equip girls and young women in Africa with digital literacy skills.

We also published [ITU's Digital Skills Toolkit](#), which provides recommendations for government policymakers, as well for partners in the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and academia to contribute towards equipping millions young people with job-ready digital skills.

And ITU supported the success of young innovators at [ITU Telecom World 2018](#), in Durban, South Africa. The event, which welcomed more than 3100 participants from 94 countries gave tech entrepreneurs the opportunity to meet investors, get advice from mentors, and gain visibility through ITU Telecom Awards.

Working together to achieve success

I feel very encouraged by our accomplishments and trust that, as long as we continue working together, we will succeed in making great strides towards sustainable and inclusive development.

Great things can happen when a wide variety of specialized groups and individuals are motivated to achieve a common set of goals. So I look forward to our continued work with ITU-AJ, Japan, and all of our ITU members, with a renewed focus on the 2030 development agenda.

I wish you all a peaceful, healthy, and happy 2019.