

New Year Message from the ITU Secretary-General

—Bringing the Benefits of Digital Transformation to All—



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Dear Friends of ITU in Japan,
This past year has been full of challenges, from coping with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to addressing the increasingly devastating impacts of climate change.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have emerged as a powerful source for good, with an unprecedented 4.9 billion people using the Internet in 2021. ICTs have changed our lives and societies forever, but we must never forget all those who remain offline and are still left behind.

The UN Secretary-General himself has challenged the world to achieve affordable, universal connectivity by 2030. It is a huge challenge – one that will require a new strategy for ICT development, especially when it comes to investments in digital infrastructure in underserved areas.

Investment in infrastructure sits at the center of my strategy for ICT development, based on four pillars: Infrastructure, Investment, Innovation and Inclusiveness. I have stressed the importance of these “4 I’s” at major global venues with world leaders since the start of the crisis, and I count on all ITU partners in Japan to help carry this vision forward.

I commend the Government of Japan for supporting ITU in its efforts to expand access to affordable and reliable connectivity in some of the least well-connected countries in the response to and aftermath of the pandemic through initiatives such as Connect2Recover. The foundational work of this initiative on data, resilience and policy will help support other landmark initiatives like Giga, the joint ITU-UNICEF global initiative to connect every school to the Internet by 2030.

All these initiatives harness the power of ICTs and emerging

technologies ranging from AI to 5G to accelerate progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address humanity’s most pressing challenges. As a long-established global source of ICT innovation and a leader in important areas of ITU’s work, Japan has a prominent role to play in this endeavour.

I applaud Japan’s mobile operators for accelerating their 5G roll out since the start of 2021. ITU plays a central part in the development of 5G mobile networks by both managing the radio spectrum and developing globally applicable standards for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT), such as the detailed specifications of the terrestrial radio interfaces of IMT-2020 published by ITU in February 2021.

The year ahead will be a big year for ITU and the world of ICT, with the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, the World Telecommunication Development Conference and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 all being held in the span of a single year. I am confident that Japan will take an active part in these conferences and in bringing the benefits of digital transformation to all.

I thank the Government of Japan for its role in the development of ICTs and its significant financial support to ITU, as well as the many Japanese companies that are Sector Members of ITU and our Japanese Academia Members for providing ITU with valuable technical expertise.

As 2021 marked the 50th anniversary of the ITU Association of Japan, we at ITU are grateful for the continued support we have received from ITU-AJ and look forward to what this partnership will bring for the next 50 years to come.

Wishing you all a healthy, peaceful, and happy New Year!