

# 2024 New Year Message



**Doreen Bogdan-Martin**  
ITU Secretary-General

I send my greetings and best wishes to all members of the ITU Association of Japan for a joyful and prosperous year ahead. I also wish to express my gratitude for your diligent efforts in our many successful collaborations throughout the past year.

Together we are making progress on our shared goals of sustainable digital transformation and universal connectivity. And I believe we are poised for even greater achievements in these areas in 2024.

We have much to celebrate, from the successful AI for Good Summit in July to our inaugural SDG Digital event in September ahead of the UN General Assembly meetings, where we outlined a digital-driven action plan to accelerate the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Japan has shown exceptional leadership on the global stage, promoting digital progress through its G7 presidency.

Technology was a central theme at the 49th G7 Summit held in Hiroshima in May. I was pleased to see the initiation of the Hiroshima Artificial Intelligence (AI) Process to set common rules for governing AI and to foster its ethical development.

On October 30, G7 leaders affirmed their commitment to the Hiroshima AI Process in a statement welcoming the guiding principles and code of conduct. They pledged to manage risks from generative AI models to protect individuals, civil society, and rule of law principles, with the goal of shaping an inclusive governance for artificial intelligence.

Both ITU and the G7 are dedicated to creating a more equitable, secure, and sustainable digital world for generations to come. The groundbreaking work under the G7 Hiroshima AI Process will benefit all the Member States ITU serves as the UN agency for digital technologies.

I also commend Japan for hosting the Internet Governance Forum this year in October.

In his opening IGF address, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida highlighted the transformative potential of generative AI. I share his enthusiasm for the positive impact AI can have on our shared digital future and support his call for a balanced approach between seizing AI's opportunities and mitigating its risks.

We must also keep in mind that joining the AI revolution requires being part of the broader digital revolution in the first place.

2.6 billion people are still offline across the world, with many of them living in the Global South.

Several countries — especially developing and least developed countries — are struggling to build capacity to respond to the challenges posed by AI while striving to seize digital opportunities whenever and wherever possible.

To better understand each country's 'AI readiness,' ITU is surveying its 193 Member States for a comprehensive overview. We also plan to integrate AI capacity support into our digital transformation offerings in collaboration with partners like UNDP, particularly in countries with low technological capabilities.

ITU will continue to contribute to global AI governance, in particular in the key area of technical standards, which is a prerequisite for effective implementation of safeguards.

With only a few years left to deliver on the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, success hinges on our ability to make progress on strategic objectives, as outlined in the SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda launched by ITU and UNDP at the SDG Digital event in September.

As the UN Secretary-General said, the SDGs aren't just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights and expectations of people everywhere.

One number captures the significance of this moment more than any other: 70% of the SDG targets directly benefit from digital technologies.

Where do we go from here? I have always believed strategic partnerships and diverse financing can help advance a range of objectives. That is why ITU was proud to announce new commitments from private sector, finance bodies, international and philanthropic foundations at SDG Digital.

These include new commitments to our Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, which now aims to mobilize 100 billion USD in pledges by 2026. I thank entities in Japan for their pledges worth 2.72 million USD supporting innovative projects to expand connectivity and accelerate digital transformation globally. And I encourage others to follow their example.

I would like to congratulate Seizo Onoe-san for a successful first year in his leadership of ITU's Standardization Bureau.

Digital technologies are on top of the global agenda. As we look forward to the next year's Summit of the Future in September and Japan hosting Expo 2025, I believe we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the digital world we want — one that empowers everyone, everywhere.

Happy New Year!