

ITU New Year Message for New Breeze magazine, ITU Association of Japan



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I am honoured and delighted to extend my New Year greetings for 2025 to all the members of the ITU Association of Japan.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) looks forward to another year of working together with all of you. Our shared quest is to extend the benefits of digital technologies to everyone, everywhere, and make the dawning digital age sustainable and prosperous for all.

I say this, unfortunately, amid high geopolitical tensions, acute economic and job concerns, and precarious food security for much of the world. Nor can we ignore droughts, floods, fires, and severe storms, with almost every month in 2024 breaking new temperature records.

While the dangers we face could dishearten us, they have instead deepened our resolve. Digital technologies give us the tools to tackle the world's most pressing challenges. Artificial intelligence (AI) alone can help accelerate progress on nearly 80 per cent of United Nations targets under the Sustainable Development Goals – a prospect that drives us to step up ITU's vital contribution as the UN agency for digital technologies.

The Global Digital Compact, recently adopted at the UN General Assembly, recognizes the need for technology solutions to reinvigorate sustainable development.

Our recent ITU World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-24) reaffirmed the importance of strong international technical standards, with new resolutions in key areas ranging from AI to sustainable digital transformation, digital public infrastructure, and emergency communications. In parallel, we will keep enhancing global digital cooperation through our diverse multi-stakeholder World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and AI for Good communities.

So much remains to be done. Still, today, approximately one-third of humanity is offline, while countless others struggle with inadequate connections, unaffordable access, the lack of relevant content in their own languages, and privacy and safety concerns.

But let's start 2025 with reflections on how far we have come together.

ITU will mark its 160th anniversary this year. For 146 of those years, Japan has stood as a vital partner in our extraordinary journey of technological innovation and progress.

The ITU Association of Japan started in 1971 – when fixed-line telephone access was our top issue. Now, with the space economy, quantum computing and AI, we are stepping into a new era.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized

during his historic visit to our headquarters in Geneva in June: "ITU's technical expertise and commitment to collaboration are the very qualities our world needs as we navigate a new digital age."

More than ever, the world depends on ITU's radiocommunication, standardization and development work – to embrace this new chapter and bring the benefits of digital technologies to everyone around the world.

Japan, its industry players, and, of course, the ITU Association of Japan play a critical role in helping us build a more connected, safe, and sustainable digital future.

The support of Japan, as one of our biggest budget contributors, enables us to help developing countries upgrade their technical and regulatory capacity. Together, we are making a real difference in bridging the standardization gap.

The Japanese digital community is also our partner in exploring ethics and governance questions on new and emerging technologies like AI.

Notably, the Government of Japan has helped us step up the Green Digital Action initiative, rallying tech companies, industry associations, financing institutions, UN agencies, and other key organizations in a push to rein in tech-related greenhouse gas emissions, manage electronic waste, and leverage telecom infrastructure to boost environmental resilience.

52 companies, universities, research institutes, associations and other organisations from Japan support initiatives across all three sectors of ITU's work. I extend my most sincere gratitude to Japan for its unwavering commitment and support.

All of us at ITU look forward to deepening our collaboration with you as we work towards implementing the Global Digital Compact, particularly in aligning its outcomes with the upcoming WSIS+20 review in 2025.

The actions we take together this year will lay the foundation for the future – not just for ourselves, but for generations to come.

I look forward to another year of constructive collaboration with my fellow elected officials on ITU's leadership team, including distinguished engineer Seizo Onoe-san, our Director of Telecommunication Standardization, as we all seek new ways to advance the power of technologies and connectivity to make the world better for everyone, everywhere.

We also look forward to sharing our work with the Japanese people – and indeed the world – as part of the United Nations Pavilion for EXPO 2025 in Osaka.

I wish all members of the ITU Association of Japan a very happy and prosperous New Year. May this year, and the many years to come, be prosperous, progressive, and peaceful for all.