

7th Asia Pacific Spectrum Management Conference

Virtual event

Opening Speech

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Mr. Masanori Kondo, Secretary General of APT,

Dear participants and friends,

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to all.

I would like to start by thanking Forum Global for their kind invitation. It is a pleasure for me to be here with you today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During these times of COVID, our world as we know it changed dramatically. Many things that we thought impossible, became possible. And long known truths became obvious – and they are now difficult to ignore.

Solving the digital divide has been on the agenda of several countries and regions for many years. But perhaps its criticality was not as evident as it is now. Today, it is clear. For people to have access to vitally needed services and opportunities, such as teleworking, telemedicine and distance learning, broadband connectivity is a must. Yet, more than half of the population from Asia Pacific still does not have access to the Internet.

We have also recognized that digital transformation was a process that companies and governments were slowly undertaking. Changes that might otherwise have taken years to implement in normal circumstances, were implemented in only a few months. The pandemic made it visible that transformation was imperative to be part of the digital economy.

Finally, the fear of tackling environmental issues and slowing down the economy had vanished. Indeed, lockdowns provided the opportunity to see what benefits would be realized by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transforming our energy system.

As you can see, the global health crisis exposed pressing issues that were not new but are now viewed through a different lens. We realize, more than ever, that ICTs have a special role to play in a new post-pandemic world.

Dear colleagues,

We must decide what lessons to take away from this period. Radiocommunication services can provide broadband connectivity to communities and households; ensure access to critical services; promote safety of life on land, in the air and at sea; allow us to explore the universe, and monitor the health and natural resources of our planet. They can open the path to long awaited transformations. How will this COVID period affect our future decisions at the national, regional, and global level?

The increasing use and need for radio-based technologies and the tremendous opportunities for societal development that these technologies provide, have since elevated the importance of the radio-frequency spectrum and national spectrum management.

The increase in demand requires that spectrum be used ever more efficiently and that effective spectrum management processes be implemented. These are topics that will be covered during this event.

The last world radiocommunication conference has identified additional frequencies for IMT in the millimeter bands above 26 GHz. As a result, there is more than 17 GHz of radio spectrum that has been “identified” for IMT. Millimeter-wave bands were proposed for the deployment of 5G applications that require large contiguous blocks of spectrum capable of providing high broadband capacity. The first deployments of these systems are most likely to be seen in urban and dense-urban areas. However, all these are already on the positive side of the digital divide.

Fortunately, the WRC-19 also adopted decisions that support the deployment of large low earth orbit satellite constellations as well as other innovative systems, such as HAPS, that can help provide broadband connectivity to everywhere on Earth, particularly to the unserved and underserved communities that are not addressed by 4G or 5G systems.

WRC-23 will now consider the UHF bands in Region 1, as well as frequencies between 3.3 and 10.5 GHz for IMT in various regions. Parts of these bands have already been allocated to mobile services or identified for IMT on a country basis.

During the next days, this event will discuss the implications of an IMT identification on the UHF, C-band, and 6 GHz band for the roll-out of the first 5G systems. Although the use of these bands for IMT in Region 3 is not on the agenda of the WRC23, decisions taken by other Regions may impact the Asia-Pacific region in our increasingly globalized world. The conference will also look at the current decision of some Administrations to use the 6 GHz band to expand broadband connectivity using Wi-Fi, which is something that they have the possibility to implement, as it does not require a modification to the Radio Regulations.

Dear friends,

In the center of the preparation process towards WRC-23 is the balance between the spectrum requirements of different services and the protection of existing users.

The need for broadband connectivity is evident. So is the need for many other services that provide significant utility to society.

In the ITU we will soon begin the sharing and compatibility studies that encompass IMT and existing services, such as broadcasting, fixed and satellite services.

The search for technically feasible solutions and cost-effective pathways will help us move from rhetoric to action. I count on you to ensure we address jointly the challenges of the digital divide, digital transformation, and environmental issues.

There is tremendous demand for use of the radio spectrum. I believe the key lesson that we can take away from this period, is that we need to return to the fundamental principles. We must ensure that all services have and can use the spectrum they actually need, that they do so in the most efficient way, and that effective spectrum management processes are implemented towards this end.

I wish you an excellent event.

Thank you very much.