

19th Global Symposium for Regulators – Opening Ceremony

ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao

Port Vila, Vanuatu – 10 July 2019

His Excellency Honorable Charlot Salwai Tabimasmass, Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
BDT Director, BR Director,
Mr. Chair,
Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first thing that strikes us when we set foot on Vanuatu is the beauty of this South Pacific Ocean nation. But what stays with us is the warmth of its people. So allow me to start by thanking the Government and the people of Vanuatu for their extraordinary hospitality and for hosting the 19th Global Symposium for Regulators.

We are honored by the presence of the Honorable Charlot Salwai Tabimasmass, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, who was already with us for Telecom World 2016 in Bangkok and for our Plenipotentiary Conference last November in Dubai. Honorable Prime Minister, you are now the only Prime Minister to have spoken at three of our major events. We at ITU are grateful for your support. And we are proud of what Vanuatu has accomplished in the field of ICT in recent years.

It is wonderful to be here with all the participants and delegates who, in many cases, have traveled a long way to share their views and their experiences – welcome to GSR-19!

Our host this year is a symbol of resilience, a country on the forefront of the fight against climate change. It's also a country with forward-looking ICT initiatives, like the National Digital Governance Roadmap. There is a lot we can learn from Vanuatu. And that's why we are all here today – to build on each other's knowledge and experience to develop clear and robust regulatory frameworks.

The Pacific region is faced with unique challenges: a very large sea area, small land masses and populations isolated from each other, and relatively low economic development and ICT connectivity. The ocean connects but also separates people, making transportation difficult and communication critical.

We don't hear views from the region often enough. GSR-19 presents us with a golden opportunity to hear directly from those who live and work right here in the Pacific region. Our last Plenipotentiary Conference. PP-18 approved, among others, a revised resolution supporting Small Island Developing States and Landlocked Developing Countries. We are pleased to come to the region to discuss connectivity strategies.

In today's digital economy, the line between the ICT sector and other industries is increasingly blurry. Relationships between institutions, market players, and people are changing. And emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, the Internet of Things, and 5G are putting regulatory paradigms to the test.

Accordingly, national regulators are faced with new technologies as well as new business and investment models. From agriculture and transportation to banking and health, no sector of the economy is immune to digital transformation. As a result, collaborative regulation has been steadily gaining momentum.

Delegates, colleagues,

ITU has developed the key concepts of "collaborative regulation" and "fifth-generation regulation" to describe the need for ICT policy and regulatory frameworks to be inclusive, up-to-date, flexible, incentive-based, evidence-based, decision-oriented and market-driven. At stake is the regulators' ability to unlock investment to support growth, jobs, innovation, and digital transformation across sectors and regions.

Moving towards a more open, collaborative and cross-sectoral regulation is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and delivering on the promise of the digital economy – not just for the benefit of consumers and businesses, but to all those who are still unconnected around the world. ITU's latest statistics remind us that 3.7 billion people are still waiting to reap the benefits of the digital economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the next three days, I encourage you to strengthen our dialogue and continue to learn from each other. Let us build tomorrow's regulatory frameworks – frameworks that will overcome the hurdles to investment that can often stifle progress. Let us be open to new regulatory tools and solutions. Let's act now.

I look forward to our discussions here and to this year's GSR Best Practice Guidelines.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the sponsors at GSR-2019 and once again to thank the Honorable Prime Minister for his valuable support and to the Vanuatu Government and its people to invite GSR-2019.

I wish you all a successful and productive GSR-19!

Thank you.