

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM'S STATEMENT

"Leveraging Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific"

Bismillahir Rahmaa Nir Rahiim.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very good morning/afternoon.

Mister/Madam Chair,

Madam Executive Secretary,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is my honour to represent Brunei Darussalam at ESCAP's 80th Session, and a pleasure to be here again amongst esteemed colleagues.
- We are here, at this platform to advance our efforts in achieving the sustainable development goals. Taking into account today's fast changing global landscape - which has much to do with technological advancement in the 4th Industrial Revolution - I feel it is timely that we turn our focus towards digital innovation.
- In Brunei Darussalam, our efforts are centred on the wise guidance of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, who has expressed Brunei Darussalam's aspiration in becoming a smart nation during a Titah His Majesty delivered in conjunction with his 73rd Birthday Celebration. This has spurred government efforts towards creating a 'Digital Government', 'Digital Economy' and 'Digital Society', driven by the Digital Economy Masterplan 2025 which was launched in June 2020. This Masterplan is framed with the vision of "Smart Nation through Digital Transformation", in an effort to push for digital transformation for socio-economic growth as well as towards realizing our nation's vision of Wawasan 2035.
- To advance the digital ecosystem development, three main projects have been introduced: i) the National Information Hub (NIH); ii) Digital Identity; and iii) Digital Payment Hub. Launched in June of 2021, the NIH serves as a secure centralized platform for storing, managing, and disseminating data and information collected within the Government. The Digital Identity Project and the Digital Payment Hub Project helps to ensure a safer, conducive space for individuals to make transactions online.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Since the launch of the Masterplan, Brunei Darussalam has gone up 5 places from 92nd to 87th place in the Global Innovation Index, and based on the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) ICT Development Index, Brunei is placed 12th out of 169 economies, and 2nd in ASEAN.
- To sustain our efforts and ensure its relevance, Brunei has a comprehensive National STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) Framework that aims to improve Brunei's competitiveness in science and technology. We also pay close attention to improving "inclusive digital literacy" through various training programmes such as "Digital for All" that focuses on digital literacy training for specific demographics such as senior citizens; educational initiatives such as "Coding with Smart Devices" and "Code for Fun"; a Digital Upskilling Programme that offers up to 100% subsidy for industry-relevant competencies; and Tech Immersion, a mentorship program for start-ups to explore merging technologies.
- However, Brunei Darussalam's market is relatively small, and limited knowledge plus the cost of transitioning into a full digital ecosystem provides for a big hill to climb. There is much room for improvement, none more important than to prepare the nation so that they can fully utilize what the government can provide in terms of digital services. The people are the key to our long-term success, because digital innovation feeds off their needs.
- In this regard, Brunei Darussalam places great value in the potential of the youth as impetus for innovation. They are the hope in carrying forward the country's digital transformation and the best influencer for all other members of society to embrace the digital age.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- At this opportunity, I would also like to share that Brunei Darussalam is not alone in our endeavours. As a member of ASEAN, we have collective support and shared commitment towards advancing digital innovation to drive regional development and integration through regional initiatives and platforms such as the ASEAN Digital Innovation Programme and the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework.
- With this, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the ESCAP for providing us with this invaluable platform to convene and collaborate. ESCAP's commitment to fostering dialogue, cooperation, and partnership among its member states is commendable and deeply appreciated.

Thank you.
