

U.S. National Statement , UN ESCAP 80th Session
Bangkok, Thailand, April 22

On behalf of the United States of America, it is an honor to address you join in this session.

I thank Executive Secretary Alisjahbana [ah-LEASE-jah-bah-nah] for her continued leadership of the ESCAP [ESS-cap] Secretariat.

The United States is committed to working together with all stakeholders to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in the ESCAP region and globally. I would like to share some examples of how we are “Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.”

The United States’ vision for a free and open, connected, prosperous, resilient, and secure Indo-Pacific and the United States’ commitment to uphold principles such as ASEAN centrality – which we share with many of you represented here – includes various efforts under Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, or DCCP. For example, the Digital Invest program, a blended finance program, is mobilizing hundreds of millions of dollars in investment capital globally to accelerate investment in last-mile connectivity and financial technologies.

We are also expanding access to fast, secure, trusted, interoperable, and reliable internet connectivity in the Pacific. Our DCCP partners at the United States Trade and Development Agency funded a feasibility study of the Central Pacific Cable, to support connectivity to Pacific Island countries. Furthermore, the State Department’s Cyberspace and Digital Policy Bureau plans to contribute 15 million dollars to support connectivity projects across multiple Pacific Island Countries.

We also support the development of communications infrastructure; open, competitive markets; and cybersecurity capacity through USAID’s Digital Asia Accelerator across Southeast Asia. This Accelerator improves digital skills and safety practices among micro, small, and medium enterprises and civil society, and increases their capacity to engage on digital economy policy issues.

We are investing in the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative, a pooled partnership that identifies, funds, and accelerates evidence-based, proven

solutions to close the gender digital divide and women's economic security. Since Vice President Kamala Harris launched the initiative last year, partners have committed over 800 million dollars.

In support of digital development, we are also collaborating with the U.S. private sector, whose robust presence is reflected in the United States being the largest source of FDI for ASEAN. Last September, Secretary Blinken announced that the United States will provide 15 million dollars, with an additional 21 million from the private sector, to promote the responsible use and governance of Artificial Intelligence. This includes programs that leverage AI tools to help countries achieve SDGs as well as providing AI skills training and certification to 4 million people. We support this effort through the AI Connect programs, which encourages the responsible stewardship of AI technologies and empower low- and middle-income countries to participate more effectively in global, multi-stakeholder conversations on AI policy.

The in-person regional conference on AI for the Indo-Pacific kicks off in Vietnam today. Also in this region, we are funding the development of the ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap, which will support ASEAN to operationalize responsible AI across the region.

On the global scale, just last month, the UN General Assembly adopted the U.S.-led resolution on "Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development." This consensus resolution was co-sponsored by 123 Member States and helps ensure that the benefits of AI reach countries from all regions, and at all levels of development.

I am honored to share these examples of U.S. contributions to digital innovation for sustainable development among ESCAP members and associate members. They are real, relevant, and recent initiatives of U.S. commitment to realizing the positive potential of digital transformation while safeguarding against potential downsides. We look forward to nurturing further cooperation with you on digital programs and policies to reach our collective objectives and the larger Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.