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RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING CONNECTIVITY AND ENHANCING DIGITAL ECONOMY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Draft Resolution Sponsored by Thailand

We, the parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, for the 30th Annual Meeting of the APPF under the theme *Parliaments and the Post-COVID-19 Sustainable Development*:

Reaffirming prior APPF Resolutions on accelerating digital economy and enhancing connectivity (APPF29/ RES/ 07) , Resolution on enhancing economic integration and promoting trade in the region (APPF29/ RES/ 08) adopted in Seoul, Republic of Korea, Resolution on promoting sustainable economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region through the digital economy (APPF25/RES/08) adopted in Nadi, Fiji, and Resolution on fostering and strengthening connectivity towards economic integration and shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region (APPF24/RES/09) adopted in Vancouver, Canada;

Noting with deep concerns about the negative impacts of COVID-19 and the spillover effects of the geopolitical tensions, which have aggravated the global economic activities, resulting in high commodity prices, rising inflation, supply chain disruption, deteriorating financial situation, and increasing food insecurity; as well as the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects in 2022, which predicts that global growth would hover around 2.9 per cent in 2022 and 3.0 per cent in 2023;

Noting further that the negative impacts of the outbreak may last longer than anticipated, and that the digital economy must adapt to the changing environment where effective policies, rules and legal interoperability in the region would not only create a smooth transition for digital transformation but also provide forward-looking strategies that effectively address new challenges in the future;

Bearing in mind technological development, particularly digital technology, plays a crucial role in advancing trade and investment, developing educational innovation and fostering social development by ensuring a much more inclusive and sustainable economy where everyone can seize economic opportunities, improve their well-being, and participate in the engines of growth;

Taking note that the lessons learned from the health crisis have emphasized the importance of digitalization in economic recovery, sustainable development and that, despite its pervasive impacts on trade, digitalization is trustful and envisioned as a key factor in ensuring an inclusive economy, fostering international cooperation in sustaining the cross-border movement of goods and services and bridging the digital divide, as well as promoting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs);

Draw the attention to the importance of digital literacy, e-commerce training and consultations that would be applicable tools for businesses to enhance their capabilities and competitiveness in the regional and global digital markets;

Affirm the importance of the development of an e-marketplace, digital ecosystem and enabling factors, trust and sustainability and competencies of entrepreneurs are key components that would help promote a cross border e-commerce in the region;

Emphasizing that technological advancement not only revolutionizes the potential of humankind but also poses profound challenges such as internet abuse, which has been used in various forms of cyberbullying to embarrass, harass and intimidate others; and that a legal framework to address these profound concerns and induce how the huge potential of new technologies can be best utilized for progress and especially for economic revitalization in the aftermath of COVID-19 is essential;

Acknowledging the importance of collaboration between Governments, technology companies, investors and key stakeholders in setting up international norms, rules and standards to govern the global digital world where information and electronic transactions move across geographical boundaries as well as encouraging speedy recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, enhancing competitiveness, and improving productivity towards greater economic resilience;

Deeply concerned that vulnerable populations benefit less from new technologies than expected, and that digital inequality will reduce the possibilities for humanity to seize economic opportunities toward progress, prosperity and sustainability; and

Fully aware of the importance of enhancing connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region through physical, institutional and people-to-people linkages, as comprehensive connectivity would not merely create enormous economic opportunities for growth, but help promote mutual understanding and respect between people from different cultures and backgrounds;

RESOLVE TO:

1. ***Call on*** APPF Member Parliaments to act decisively to bridge the digital divide within countries and between developed and developing countries, and build inclusive digital economies to address development challenges, enable people to harness the potential of new technologies and accelerate the progress towards sustainable development goal targets by 2030;
2. ***Encourage*** APPF Member Parliaments to work with their respective governments to establish a rules-based multilateral trading system that ensures fair and equal opportunities for people to benefit from the digital economy;
3. ***Recommend*** APPF Member Parliaments to review their laws to keep pace with the changing global economy to set up new guidelines to facilitate new investments, eliminate unnecessary barriers to trade that impede economic development and enable entrepreneurs to seize new business opportunities in order to move towards sustainable and resilient economic growth;

4. ***Call upon*** the APPF Member Parliaments to develop a national digital economy policy and strategy that drives the country toward digitalization and the digital economy, sets up a digital ecosystem, widens access to digital technologies, builds up trust and confidence, increases the competitiveness of local entrepreneurs and encourages businesses to leverage the full potential of the digital economy;
5. ***Encourage*** APPF Member Parliaments to allocate appropriate financial support to invest in the digital infrastructure to maximize their competitiveness; provide fair and equal access to people from all segments of society to take full advantage of the internet and digital technologies; and establish an environment conducive to the advancement of the digital economy and available for advanced digital innovation and foreign investments;
6. ***Encourage*** the integration of authorities across different sectors to translate the national digital economy policies into action and allow all concerned parties to work and coordinate their efforts more effectively to pave the way for the common goal of a secure, prosperous, sustainable future without duplication of effort;
7. ***Call on*** APPF Member Parliaments to revise and adopt laws and regulations that not only effectively address economic challenges in the digital world, protect the right to privacy of individuals, improve digital literacy, and create learning societies that use digital technologies safely and creatively, create competitiveness, encourage more economic activities on the internet and build trust and confidence of the people to access the digital world, but to tackle illegal challenges such as cyber-bullying and personal data violation;
8. ***Also Call on*** APPF Member Parliaments to seek effective and appropriate measures to curb potential threats from cybercrimes and strengthen cybersecurity capabilities as APPF Member Countries have become increasingly reliant on digital technology;
9. ***Urge*** APPF Member Parliaments to exercise their powers to hold their respective governments to account to ensure that all actions taken by the government are consistent with national digital policies and reflect the needs of their constituents;
10. ***Encourage*** collaboration between the government, key stakeholders, private sector and related parties to create an e-commerce development plan that addresses cross-border e-commerce management, the establishment of a digital ecosystem and enabling factors, and the development of entrepreneur's competencies;
11. ***Also call on*** APPF Member Parliaments to adopt legislation that addresses e-commerce solutions, connects sellers and buyers, accommodates customer purchases and facilitates the use of technologies, transactions and data exchange for the exchange of goods and services; and
12. ***Call on*** the APPF to play a role as a platform for international parliamentary cooperation among Member countries to exchange knowledge, share best practices and monitor the development of the digital economy and connectivity across the region through a constructive discussion.
