

# New Year Message for *New Breeze* magazine, ITU Association of Japan



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**A**s the first sunrise of 2026 shines over Japan and the world, we are filled with a renewed sense of purpose and hope. Without diminishing the magnitude of our many global challenges, I begin this year with gratitude for all we've achieved together in 2025 and confidence in what we can accomplish in the year ahead.

Last year was one of significant momentum, but also a milestone moment for ITU and the global digital community. Together, we marked ITU's 160th anniversary on May 17, a chance to reflect on how far we've come — from the age of telegraphy to the era of AI and the dawn of quantum computing. Yet, it also reminded us how much further we must go to ensure that digital technologies not only connect people everywhere but help us tackle the challenges of our time while advancing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Japan has been part of that story almost from the beginning. When Japan joined ITU in 1879, it reflected truly international technical cooperation. For nearly a century and a half, Japan has remained one of ITU's most dedicated members, combining innovation, excellence, and a spirit of multilateralism that continues to inspire our work today. It is also one of our biggest budget contributors, enabling ITU to help developing countries strengthen their technical and regulatory capacity.

In Geneva, we celebrated our 160 years with events reflecting the past and future of technology, including a lightshow at ITU headquarters symbolizing how innovation can light a path toward progress. We were equally proud to mark this anniversary at the United Nations Pavilion of EXPO 2025 Osaka; a showcase of technology highlighting how digital cooperation can help shape a more inclusive and connected future.

Throughout 2025, Japan remained one of ITU's most active Member States across all three sectors. From pioneering 5G and contributing to early 6G development, disaster-resilient infrastructure, affordable access and green digital transformation, Japanese experts continue to shape global standards and strengthen our capacity to use technology for good.

At ITU, we were especially proud to see our Director of Telecommunication Standardization, Seizo Onoe-san, receive the prestigious Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Jagadish Chandra Bose Medal in Wireless Communications — the first ever awarded. His achievement, for contributions to the development, collaborative facilitation, and deployment of 3G and 4G mobile communication systems through R&D and global standardization — reflects the best of Japan's innovation and its global impact through ITU's work.

2025 also reaffirmed the importance of working together. At the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, two-thirds of world leaders raised digital issues in their statements, with

AI at the top of the global agenda. We also saw the launch of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance — an inclusive forum where governments, industry, academia, and civil society can co-design frameworks for safe, ethical, and human-centred AI.

As the UN specialized agency for digital technologies, ITU looks forward to supporting the UN Secretary General in hosting the inaugural Global Dialogue along the margins of our flagship AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva next year.

Last summer's concurrent AI for Good and WSIS+20 High-Level Event in Geneva drew more than 11,000 participants from 169 countries — the largest and most diverse in each event's history. We saw inspiring advances in brain-machine interfaces, quantum technologies, AI for health, and digital solutions for climate action. Japan's participation in AI conversations reminds us that when people come together, dialogue can lead to inclusive cooperation, concrete action, and hope.

Japanese companies, universities and experts continue to bring deep technical insight and ethical leadership to our global AI community. Japan's support for AI and cybersecurity capacity-building programmes, and its pledges under the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition — which reached \$80 billion (USD) in commitments at our Digital@UNGA Anchor Event in New York — demonstrate Japan's commitment to closing the digital divide and keeping people safe online.

Looking ahead, ITU and Japan are working closely on shared priorities that will shape the digital decade ahead: implementing the guidance offered by the WSIS framework, including its 20-year review, and the Global Digital Compact; aligning digital cooperation with sustainable development and human rights; advancing the Green Digital Action initiative, and expanding connectivity and digital skills in developing countries and in small island and landlocked states.

Japan's leadership, through more than 50 members from industry, universities, research institutes, associations and other organizations, remains essential to these efforts. Your technical excellence, generosity, and steadfast belief in international cooperation continue to make a real difference.

The world today faces profound challenges, from conflict and economic uncertainty to the accelerating climate crisis. Yet it also holds opportunities for connection, innovation, and collective action. Let us draw strength from our shared history and from the enduring partnership between ITU and Japan to guide the digital transformation of tomorrow.

From all of us at ITU, I extend heartfelt thanks to the ITU Association of Japan for your invaluable support.

May 2026 bring renewed collaboration, innovation, and peace for all.

*Akemashite omedetō gozaimasu.*