

# **United Nations Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum: Boosting Foreign Direct Investment in the Digital Economy for Sustainable Development**

## **Context**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation, especially in developing countries. Measures enacted by governments to contain the pandemic propelled businesses towards digitalization and the provision of online operations and services. At the same time, demand for digital services exponentially grew.

Recognizing this, several countries in the Asia-Pacific region<sup>1</sup> have developed national digital economy strategies and policies, and the role that foreign direct investment (FDI) can have in building digital economies needs greater attention. For instance, FDI can contribute to developing robust digital infrastructure and improving access to digital education and training systems.

There are three particular areas in which FDI has immense potential to contribute to digital development and transformation, namely in:

1. promoting digital businesses,
2. encouraging digital adoption, and
3. building digital infrastructure.

With this in mind, the United Nations Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum will focus on bringing together investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and investors as well as other stakeholders to discuss what actions and measures can be undertaken to promote and facilitate FDI in these three areas, investment opportunities in Asia and the Pacific in each area, and the requirements and expectations of investors.

The Forum is being co-organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies. This is the second iteration of Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum,<sup>2</sup> and both have been a key deliverable of ESCAP's project "Building the capacity of Asia-Pacific countries to utilize science, technology and innovation policies to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals" funded by the Government of China.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Malaysia's Digital Economy Blueprint

<sup>2</sup> The Inaugural Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum was held in June 2019 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. More information can on the event can be found here: <https://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-innovation-forum-2019-technology-start-ups-sustainable-development>

## Date and Venue

The Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum will be held 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, at the Xiamen International Conference & Exhibition Center in Xiamen, China. The Forum will take part as a special thematic forum during the [China International Fair for Investment & Trade](#) from 8-11 September, 2023.

## Target Audience

CEOs and deputy CEOs of foreign direct investors, CEOs and deputy CEOs of investment promotion agencies, representatives from governments in Asia and the Pacific, academic institutions, international organizations, business councils and chambers, other members of the private sector, and the media. About 100 in person participants are expected.

## Background Information

For more information on the role and importance of FDI in the digital economy and the measures that governments and investment promotion agencies can undertake, please refer to ESCAP's 2023 publication: [Policy Guidebook on Attracting and Promoting FDI in the Digital Economy](#).

## Contact person(s):

**Heather Taylor-Strauss**  
[Taylor21@un.org](mailto:Taylor21@un.org)

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME	
Saturday 9 September	
<b>Opening Session</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
10:00-10:30	<p><b>Moderator: Jonathan Wong, Chief on Innovation, Enterprise and Investment Section, ESCAP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader from Fujian Provincial Government</li> <li>• H.E. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, ESCAP</li> <li>• H.E. Nurul Ichwan, Deputy Minister for Investment Promotion, Ministry of Investment/Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM)</li> <li>• Ismail Ersahin, Executive Director, World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies</li> <li>• Vice Minister of MOFCOM</li> </ul>
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>National Strategies for Digital Development and the Role of Foreign Direct Investment</b>

10:30-11:15	<p><i>This roundtable will provide the opportunity for government stakeholders to discuss the strategies they have developed for boosting investment in the digital economy.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Courtney Fingar, Fingar Direct Investment and WAIPA</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b> Manel Bondi, Digital Cooperation Organization Yan Xiao, World Economic Forum Ambreen Iftikhar, Board of Investment, Pakistan Raymond Siva, Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation Harley Seyedin, the American Chamber of Commerce in South China</p>
11 :15-11 :25	Discussion and Q&A
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Incorporating Artificial Intelligence into Investment Promotion</b>
11:25-12:20	<p>This session will focus on how developing country IPAs can leverage artificial intelligence tools in their investment promotion activities. Panelists will discuss what tools are most likely to be relevant for IPAs, how they can incorporate them into their investment promotion activities, and also the risks involved in utilizing artificial intelligence for investment promotion.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Courtney Fingar, Fingar Direct Investment and WAIPA</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b> Kata Varblane, Invest Estonia Seth O’Farrell, fDi Intelligence, Financial Times Group Kim Zietlow, FDI Center Glenn Barklie, Investment Monitor</p>
12 :20-12 :30	Discussion and Q&A
12 :30-13 :30	Lunch break
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Promoting Investment in and from Digital Businesses</b>
13:30-14:15	<p><i>This session will focus on how FDI can be used to promote digital businesses. IPAs will discuss the strategies they are using to attract FDI in this area, investment opportunities they have, and investors will discuss what they require when they go to a host country. The session will also discuss the role of digital economic zones to promote digital businesses.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Courtney Fingar, Fingar Direct Investment and WAIPA</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b> H.E. Glenn G. Peñaranda, Philippine Trade and Investment Center, Philippines Renuka Weerakone, Board of Investments, Sri Lanka</p>

	Jamie Ko, Grab Bill Deng, Xtransfer Chen Lei, Lishui Economic-Technological Development Area
14 :15-14 :25	Discussion and Q&A
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Attracting Investment to Encourage Digital Adoption</b>
14:25-15:20	<p><i>This session will focus on how FDI can be used to encourage traditional firms to adopt digital technologies. A key theme will be the role of regional and global value chains encouraging digital adoption of SMEs. IPAs will discuss the strategies they are using to attract FDI in this area, investment opportunities they have, and investors will discuss what they require when they go to a host country.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Courtney Fingar, Fingar Direct Investment and WAIPA</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b> Musarat Ali, Investment Fiji Esra Dogan Tulgan, Investment Office of the Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye Aba Schubert, Dorae Layton Lok, CITIC Telecom CPC Simon Law, Sino Group</p>
15 :20-15 :30	Discussion and Q&A
15:30-15:45	<i>Tea Break</i>
<b>Session 5</b>	<b>Attracting Investment to Build Digital Infrastructure</b>
15 :45-16 :30	<p>This session will focus on how developing country IPAs can utilize FDI to build digital infrastructure necessary to bridge digital divides.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Courtney Fingar, Fingar Direct Investment and WAIPA</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b> Zhandos Temirgali, Kazakh Invest Masni Muhammad, Malaysian Investment Development Authority Shivam Batham, Invest India Foong Chee Kheong, Axiata</p>
16:30-16:40	Discussion and Q&A
<b>Closing Session</b>	
16:40-16:45	<b>Rupa Chanda, Director</b> Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, United Nations ESCAP