

Opening Remarks of Stephen Schmidt, ITS Chair at the 16th International Telecommunications Society (ITS) Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, November 26-28, 2023

Good morning!

Welcome to Bangkok!

Welcome to the 16th International Telecommunications Society (ITS) Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, hosted by the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC)!

A very big thank you – *KHOB-KHUN KHRAP* – to everyone who has made the effort to be here, in person.

It is really wonderful to be back in Asia! **In a very real and fundamental sense, being in Asia is coming home for ITS:** our very first conference took place almost 40 years ago in Tokyo, Japan, and we have returned to Asia almost *25 times* since for conferences and workshops – drawn in by the vitality of the region and the vitality of its scholars.

As we come together from over 20 countries, **it's fitting and proper that we have a sense of place**, as we experience this vibrant city and learn about Thailand's evolving digital landscape.

This morning, I would like to acknowledge and celebrate:

- Our conference themes
- Thailand
- Our esteemed host, NBTC

1) Conferences Themes

Our conference theme is: "***Reimagining the Future of the Digital Society***";

This theme is both an *aspiration* and *challenge* – that calls upon us to **imagine a better, more harmonious coexistence between humanity and technology.**

Throughout this conference – our papers, our questions and our discussions will advance our conference theme, including questions concerning:

- **How can we bridge the digital divide (in all of its dimensions)** in an era of rapid innovation – digital platforms, 5G, AI, and more?
- **How can we safeguard our digital realms** – to create a secure online environment where all persons can prosper, both economically and socially?
- **And most fundamentally - How can digital transformation and the AI revolution amplify the best of humanity, rather than deepening our divisions?**

ITS:

ITS is an ideal context for advancing a holistic dialogue about these questions:

ITS is a global forum for dialogue:

- **in friendship and scholarship:**
- **amongst people, nations, stakeholder communities and academic disciplines.**

2) Thailand

Thailand's journey towards a digitally empowered society is vividly painted across both bustling cities and its beautiful rural landscapes.

Thailand's digital transformation is **seamlessly integrating traditional lifestyles and contemporary advancements.**

In Bangkok:

- street vendors in traditional markets pervasively **accepting digital payments**
- highlights an **integration of tradition and transformation:**
 - where **digital innovation is driven by:**
 - **thoughtful government policy,**

- thriving startups,
- and long-term vision.

Three examples are noteworthy, in this regard.

Digital Payments Revolution

- Under the **Thailand 4.0 economic scheme**, the country has made significant strides in digital innovation:
 - **Over 60% of its vast population uses e-wallets daily**, among the world's highest rates.

Flourishing Startup Ecosystem

- **Bangkok is in the top 50 startup ecosystems:**
 - With unicorns like **Line Man Wongnai and Flash Express exceeding \$1B**.

Vision for Smart Cities

By 2025, seven provinces are poised to become home to smart cities leveraging IoT and big data for improved urban living.

3) NBTC

The **pivotal role of the NBTC** in spearheading Thailand's digital revolution cannot be overstated:

- **Thoughtful and visionary policies around mobile (5G) network deployment and digital security services (Mobile ID system)**
- **Have created indispensable regulatory and network infrastructures**, to ensure that people have access to technology and can integrate it into their lives.

The **NBTC's decision to host an ITS conference**, *once again*, marks the 6th time that NBTC has hosted an ITS event in the last 14 years and, as such, **is the continuation of a profound legacy of friendship and scholarship**.

The NBTC has hosted ITS conferences and workshops in **2009, 2012, 2017, 2018 and 2019**, with the result that **NBTC stands as one of the most globally active hosts and organizers in the history of ITS.**

Thank You's

I'm grateful to everyone who devoted time and expertise to this conference:

- My deepest appreciation to **Commissioner Suphat Suphachalasai and his colleagues at the NBTC.** Your collective vision and leadership have been instrumental.
- I extend heartfelt thanks to my friend and ITS colleague **Professor Hitoshi Mitomo**, the chair of our organizing committee.
- I would like to thank all of the **authors, presenters, and participants**, who bring the conference to life with brilliance and goodwill.
- Finally, a very special thank you to the **many, many students** whose presence and innovative ideas enrich and energize ITS.

I look forward to our adventure, together, over the next two days.

Thank you!

Stephen Schmidt
ITS Chair