

# INDIA SIGNS HOST COUNTRY AGREEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA OFFICE & INNOVATION CENTRE AT NEW DELHI

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: IT, Internet and Communications

Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Communications and H.E. Houlin Zhao, Secretary General of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) signed the Host Country Agreement (HCA) for the establishment of an Area Office & Innovation Centre of ITU in New Delhi on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.





International Telecommunication Union is the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs. ITU currently has a membership of 193 countries and over 900 private-sector entities and academic institutions.

The Area Office and Innovation Centre of ITU at New Delhi is expected to serve South Asian countries namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. The Host Country Agreement provides the legal and financial framework for establishment and operations of the Area Office.

The Area Office shall also have an Innovation Centre, which is expected to give impetus to research and development in telecommunication technologies in South Asia. The Innovation Centre will provide opportunities to academics, start-ups and SMEs to showcase their innovation at a global stage. With signing of the Host Country Agreement, the Area Office and the Innovation Centre is expected to be operational by mid 2022.

The agreement was signed in a virtual ceremony during the World Telecommunications Standardisation Assembly-20 (WTSA-20) being held in Geneva, Switzerland. WTSA is a four-yearly global conference of ITU dedicated to standardisation of the Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). India has proposed to host the next WTSA to be held in 2024.

India has been taking concrete steps towards development of telecom standards. The 5G standards developed within India have now been recognised by ITU as one of the three technologies for 5G. With more than 1.2 Billion telecom subscribers, a robust ecosystem of start-ups and innovation hubs, India is poised to contribute meaningfully in developing telecom standards further.

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