
U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



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USTDA FORUM PROMOTES THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Fostering the emergence of a thriving information and communications technology (ICT) sector in Central Asia and South Asia is the goal of a USTDA-sponsored policy and regulatory forum that opened today at the Intercontinental Hotel in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Ministers and other senior government officials from eight nations are attending the two-day event, which includes a discussion with local and U.S.-based vendors, service providers and investors about the sector's status and initiatives planned by countries in the region.

“The ability of the ICT sector to serve as a catalyst in Central and South Asia's development cannot be overstated,” said USTDA Director for Policy and Program Geoffrey Jackson in opening remarks today. “For this reason, it is important that the policy and regulatory framework that will shape the sector's development be established so as to create favorable conditions for the private sector to invest in needed infrastructure.”

The *Central and South Asia Regional Telecommunications Policy and Regulatory Forum* includes participation by senior officials from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkey. U.S. company participants, including corporate sponsors Academy for Educational Development, Telecom/Telematique, and CISCO, attended the event.

The forum is providing the private sector representatives present with insight into the varying country frameworks and how future sales or investment opportunities may be affected. Prominent industry and international financial representatives are discussing current trade and investment structuring trends and potential. Specific sessions will cover interconnection guidelines, regulations for major operators, and methods for addressing universal access.

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In addition to USTDA Policy and Program Director Jackson, the participants in today's opening session were Mr. Askar Bishigaev, Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Informatization and Communications of Kazakhstan; Ambassador David Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy at the U.S. Department of State; the Honorable Bijan R. Kian, Member of the Board of Directors at the Export-Import Bank of the United States; and Kevin Milas, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan. His Excellency Nurlan Sulaymanov, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Kyrgyz Republic, also attended the opening.

Other participants at the event include representatives of the U.S. Department of State, the National Telecommunications Information Agency at the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the Federal Communications Commission, the United States Agency for International Development, and Central and South Asian companies interested in partnering with U.S. firms.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.

-30-

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