



**ADB Institute
Tokyo, Japan**



28-30 October 2025



08:30am – 05:00pm

Digital transformation across Asia and the Pacific has opened new doors for inclusive growth. Digital trade, the exchange of goods and services ordered and delivered online, has become a powerful tool for improving access to markets, especially for low-income individuals and small businesses. Cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) is expanding rapidly, connecting micro and small enterprises to global e-commerce platforms. This has empowered underrepresented group, including women, youth, and rural entrepreneur to participate in international trade and create new livelihoods.

However, challenges remain. Many developing countries face gaps in digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and talent. Issues like fragmented regulations, weak logistics, and limited digital payment systems hinder broader participation. To unlock the full potential of digital trade, coordinated policy efforts are essential. Regional initiatives, such as ASEAN's Digital Economy Framework Agreement, are paving the way for harmonized rules, better infrastructure, and inclusive digital ecosystems.

Ultimately, building a safe, interoperable, and inclusive digital trade environment can help ensure that no one is left behind in the digital economy.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), under its Asian Think Tank Network (ATTN) platform, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), is organizing the ATTN Forum 2025 under the theme, "Enabling Accessibility and Inclusion through Digital Trade and E-commerce." The objective is to narrow the knowledge gap with respect to the role of digital trade in enabling inclusion and to enhance the capacity of researchers and think tanks in developing countries to conduct research in emerging areas concerning the digital economy.

Project Organizing Committee

- Sanchita Basu Das, Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB
- Rachita Gulati, Research Economist, ADBI
- Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment, and Innovation, ESCAP and ARTNet Coordinator
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Interested participants may join online by registering through the links below.

- For Day 1 and 2: [REGISTER HERE](#)
- For Day 3 capacity building sessions: [REGISTER HERE](#)





EVENT PROGRAM

Day 1 | Tuesday, 28 October 2025

08:30 – 09:00 Registration

Opening Session

Emcee: Kaori Hitomi, Media and Partnership Consultant, ADBI

09:00 – 09:20

Welcome Remarks

Bambang Brodjonegoro, Dean, ADBI

Opening Remarks

Abdul Abiad, Deputy Chief Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB

Congratulatory Remarks

Prof. Tshilidzi Marwala, Rector of the United Nations University (UNU) & Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Tokyo, Japan

09:20 – 09:40

Keynote Address: The Role of Digital Trade in Fostering Inclusive Growth

Shujiro Urata, Distinguished Senior Fellow and Professor Emeritus, Waseda University; Chairman at Research Institute of Economy, Trade, and Industry (RIETI)

09:40 – 09:55

Launch of the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Journal Special Theme: Digitalization as an Opportunity for Inclusive Growth in the Asia and the Pacific

Speakers:

- *Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division. Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB*
- *Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment, and Innovation, ESCAP*

09:55 – 10:00

Photo session

10:00 – 10:15

Coffee break

Special Session: Harnessing Digitalization for Good

Moderator: Sanchita Basu Das, Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB

10:15 – 11:30

Asian Development Policy Report (ADPR)

Presenter: Donghyun Park, Economic Advisor (Strategic Knowledge Initiatives), Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB [online]

Panel Discussion:

- *Dil Rahut, Vice Chair of Research and Senior Research Economist, ADBI*



- *Fukunari Kimura, President, Institute of Developing Economies-Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO)*
- *Aladdin D. Rillo, Managing Director for Policy Design and Operation, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia*
- *Cassey Lee, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Regional Economic Studies Programme, ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore*

11:30 – 01:00

Lunch Break

Session 1: State and Trend of Digital Trade and E-Commerce

 Moderator: *Sanchita Basu Das, Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB*

01:00 – 01:10

Introduction (Practitioner's Perspective)

Shandre Mugan Thangavelu, Head-Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University

01:10 – 01:45

Paper 1. Digital Trade for Macroeconomic Resilience: Evidence from ASEAN's Cross-Border E-Commerce Integration

 Presenter: *John Paolo Rivera, Senior Research Fellow, Philippine Institute for Development Studies*

 Discussant: *Cassey Lee, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Regional Economic Studies Programme, ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore*

Open Discussion

01:45 – 02:20

Paper 2. Digital Provisions in Services Trade Agreements and Mode 1 Export Effects- A Study of Exports of Selected Sectors from Asian Economies

 Presenter: *Deeparghya Mukherjee, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Management Nagpur*

 Discussant: *Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB*

Open Discussion

02:20 – 02:55

Paper 3. Can Economies Leapfrog to Digital Success? Evidence from Global E-Commerce Development Pathways

 Presenter: *Homer Pangkalinawan, Climate Change Officer, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, ADB*

 Discussant: *Dina Azhgaliyeva, Senior Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB*

Open Discussion

02:55 – 03:30

Paper 4. Unlocking Economic Gains: How E-commerce Enhances Efficiency, Productivity, and Market Access in Indonesia—Evidence from 2024 Survey

 Presenter: *Andri Yudhi Supriadi, Senior Statistician, Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia*

 Discussant: *Rachita Gulati, Research Economist, ADBI*

Open Discussion



03:30 - 03:45	Coffee break
Panel Session: Developments in Cross-Border E-Commerce: Sub-regional and Sub-sectoral Cases Moderator: Kiyoshi Taniguchi, Regional Lead Economist (Central and West Asia), Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB	
03:45 – 04:45	Emerging Trends in Cross-Border E-Commerce in Central Asia: Towards Regional Cooperation? Presenter: Zalina Enikeeva, Research Fellow, University of Central Asia How Government Leverages Digital Trade and E-Commerce to Boost Economic Growth: A Case Study from Azerbaijan Presenter: Ramil Huseyn, Deputy Executive Director, Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication, Republic of Azerbaijan Comparative Analysis of E-commerce Regulations Across Countries in Sub-Regions and the Path Forward for Cross-Border E-commerce Presenter: Muhammad Sabil Farooq, Associate Professor and Senior Researcher, Qilu Institute of Technology Can E-Commerce Promote Energy Inclusion? The Case of Solar Access in Southeast Asia Presenter: Wakana Asano, Asia Pacific Initiative (API) Takano Fellow, IISS-Asia Open Discussion
04:45 – 05:00	Wrap-up of Day 1
06:30 – 08:30	Welcome Reception (hosted by ADBI)




Day 2 | Wednesday, 29 October 2025
Special Session: Leveraging digital transformation for inclusive and sustainable development

Moderator: Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment, and Innovation, ESCAP

09:00 – 09:45 Digital transformation has created both opportunities and challenges for economies in the Asia Pacific region. This session will discuss how digitalization opportunities can be leveraged, such as in the context of credit and payments systems, transformation of businesses, the economic participation of SMEs, ESG adoption, and the transition to a green economy. It will highlight the importance of an enabling ecosystem and discuss how development policies nationally, and development cooperation internationally, can help countries in promoting inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

Panelists

- Naoyuki Yoshino, Professor Emeritus, Keio University
- Tetsushi Sonobe, Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies
- Sayuri Shirai, Fellow, ADBI

09:45 – 10:00 Coffee Break

Session 2: Impact of Digital Trade and E-Commerce on Accessibility and Inclusion

Moderator: Ms. Agnes Surry, Deputy Head and Senior Capacity Building Specialist, ADBI

10:00 – 10:10 **Introduction** (Practitioner's Perspective)
Rifki Weno, Executive Director, ASEAN Business Advisory Council

10:10 – 10:45 **Paper 5. Rural Digital Economic Transformation: The Causal Effects of E-Commerce on Economic Growth**
 Presenter: Mengyuan Cai, PhD Candidate at Nanyang Technological University
 Discussant: Manisha Pradhananga, Senior Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB
 Open Discussion

10:45 – 11:20 **Paper 6. The Role of Local-Foreign Platforms and Digital Trade in Shaping SMEs' Development in Cambodia**
 Presenters: Dina Chhorn, Centre Director and Houy Sivly, Research Assistant, Centre for Development Economics and Trade, Cambodia Development Resource Institute
 Discussant: Sanchita Basu Das, Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB
 Open Discussion

11:20 – 11:55 **Paper 7. Connected for Growth: Analyzing the Impact of E-Commerce Adoption on Firm Performance and Labor Outcomes in the Philippines through Peer Effects**
 Presenter: Ma. Kristina Ortiz, Policy Researcher, House of Representatives



	Discussant: <i>James Villafuerte, Regional Lead Economist (Southeast Asia), Economic Research and Development Impact Department, ADB</i> Open Discussion
11:55 – 01:00	Lunch break
Session 3: Policy and Regulatory Enablers for Enhanced Digital Trade and E-Commerce <i>Moderator: Rachita Gulati, Research Economist, ADBI</i>	
01:00 – 01:10	Introduction (Practitioner's Perspective) <i>Aladdin D. Rillo, Managing Director for Policy Design and Operation, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia</i>
01:10 – 01:45	Paper 8. An Analytical Framework to Establish Convergences in Cross-Border Digital Trade Rules Presenter: <i>Paul Baker, CEO and Loan Le, International Economics Consulting</i> Discussant: <i>Rupa Chanda, Director of Trade, Investment, and Innovation, ESCAP</i> Open Discussion
01:45 – 02:20	Paper 9. Regulating E-commerce for Consumer Protection: Lessons from Bangladesh and Global Best Practices Presenter: <i>Suborna Barua, Professor and Chairman Department of International Business, University of Dhaka</i> Discussant: <i>James Correia, Capacity Building and Training Associate, ADBI</i> Open Discussion
02:20 – 02:35	Coffee break
Special Talk:	
02:35 – 03:00	<i>Masahiro Kawai, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo; Senior Fellow, Policy Research Institute, Japan Ministry of Finance; and Distinguished Research Fellow, Japan Forum on International Relations</i>
Session 3: Policy and Regulatory Enablers for Enhanced Digital Trade and E-Commerce (continued) <i>Moderator: Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, ADB</i>	
03:00 – 03:35	Paper 10. Leveraging Regional Trade Agreements for Digital Trade Acceleration: An Empirical Analysis of Emerging Asian Economies Presenter: <i>Avik Ghosh, Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India</i> Discussant: <i>Thiam Hee Ng, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB</i> Open Discussion



03:35 – 04:10	Paper 11. Trade in Transition: The Prospects of Developing East Asia Towards Digital Trade Presenter: <i>Ivan Cenon Bernardo, Economist, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas</i> Discussant: <i>Arief Ramayandi, Senior Research Economist, ADBI</i> Open Discussion
04:10 – 04:20	Asia-Pacific Training and Network on Trade (ARTNeT) <i>Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment, and Innovation, ESCAP</i>
04:20 – 04:30	Closing Remarks <i>Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, ADB</i>
06:00 – 08:00	Networking Dinner (hosted by ADB)




Day 3 | Thursday, 30 October 2025

08:30 – 09:00 Registration

 09:00 – 09:05 **Session Rules and Housekeeping**

 09:05 – 09:15 **Opening Remarks**
Session 1: Digital infrastructure, Platforms, and Payment Systems: Expanding Access Across Borders

 Moderator: *Mr. Rifki Weno, Executive Director, ASEAN Business Advisory Council*

09:15 – 10:45 Robust and inclusive digital infrastructure is the backbone of digital trade and e-commerce. This session explores how connectivity, digital public infrastructure (including digital IDs, payment systems, and data exchanges), and interoperable platforms can expand access for SMEs and vulnerable groups. It will highlight the role of logistics and delivery networks, as well as innovations in cross-border payment systems and digital wallets, in reducing barriers to participation in e-commerce. The session will also examine how public-private partnerships can scale digital public goods that enable trust, security, and inclusion across ASEAN and Asia.

Presentation 1: Digital transaction and payment (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Mr. Naphongthawat Phothikit, Bank of Thailand [TBC]*

- The rise of cross-border digital payment platforms and their role in expanding SME participation in e-commerce.
- Financial inclusion and accessibility: reaching the unbanked and underbanked through digital payments.

Presentation 2: E-Commerce Platforms (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Dr. Kati Suominen, Founder and CEO Nextrade Group*

- How regional e-commerce platforms connect SMEs to international consumers.
- The role of logistics, payment systems, and trust mechanisms in enabling cross-border sales.
- Opportunities and risks for SMEs in developing economies engaging with large platforms.

Presentation 3: Cloud & Digital Public Infrastructure (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Dr. Aladdin D. Rillo, Managing Director for Policy Design and Operations, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia [TBC]*

- Building trust around data privacy, security, and reliability in cloud and digital public infrastructure.
- Making cloud and data services affordable and accessible for SMEs and startups, particularly in lower-income or rural contexts.

Moderated Discussion and Q&A (45 mins)



10:45 – 11:00

Coffee break

Session 2: Building Skills and Harnessing AI for Inclusive Digital Trade

 Moderator: *Mr. Phongpob Ben Methakullawat, Capacity Building Specialist, ADBI*

11:00 – 12:30

In a world where digital trade and e-commerce are rapidly reshaping access to markets, having the right infrastructure is necessary—but not sufficient. Access alone does not equal inclusion. For meaningful participation, people and businesses—especially MSMEs, women, young entrepreneurs, elderly, and rural communities—must be equipped with digital skills.

Digital readiness is most strongly driven by human capital: firms in countries with high digital skill readiness are far more likely to be expert users of e-commerce, marketing, and communications tools. Skills development makes a difference, particularly for otherwise excluded populations.

Alongside digital skills, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a new frontier of transformation—presenting opportunities to automate, translate, and connect, but also risks of exclusion, bias, and control centralization. This session is about aligning these two forces: upskilling people while leveraging AI responsibly so that inclusion and accessibility are embedded into digital trade ecosystems—not left to chance.

Presentation 1: Data Issues in AI and E-Commerce (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Mr. Branden Chia, Head, Regional Public Affairs (Policy), Grab*

- Role of data as the “fuel” for AI-driven personalization, logistics optimization, and fraud prevention.
- Challenges in cross-border data flows: privacy, localization, cybersecurity, and trust.
- Risks of data concentration in large platforms, creating power imbalances.
- Opportunities for open data frameworks to support SMEs and innovation.

Presentation 2: Applications of AI in E-Commerce and the Digital Economy (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Dr. Piti Srisangnam, Executive Director of ASEAN Foundation*

- How AI adoption contributes to productivity, employment shifts, and competitiveness in the digital economy.
- How are they being deployed and where
- Affordable AI tools for marketing, customer analytics, and access to new markets.

Presentation 3: AI Governance for E-Commerce (15 mins)

 Speaker: *Mr. Saruj Thipsena, Executive Directors and Chief Technology Officer, STelligence*

- AI ethics guidelines, regulatory sandboxes, and standards across the region
- International Cooperation: Need for common frameworks to govern AI in cross-border trade.

Moderated Discussion and Q&A (45 mins)



12:30 – 01:30

Lunch break

Session 3: Regional Integration and International Cooperation for Inclusive Digital Trade

 Moderator: *Mr. Saruj Thipsena, Executive Directors and Chief Technology Officer, STelligence*

01:30 – 03:00

Digital trade is inherently cross-border, but fragmentation in rules, standards, and systems raises costs for SMEs and risks excluding vulnerable groups. Regional integration through ASEAN's Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), as well as lessons from global frameworks such as DEPA, can help reduce these barriers. At the same time, cooperation must go beyond rules to cover key enablers of trust and inclusion: cross-border data flows, consumer and privacy protection, digital payments interoperability, and cybersecurity.

This session will explore how regional and international cooperation can create a more predictable, trusted, and inclusive digital trade environment for SMEs, women entrepreneurs, and LDCs.

Presentation 1: Lessons from DEPA

 Speaker: *Ms. Laura Grey, Unit Manager (Services, Investment and Digital), Trade Policy and Negotiation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand*

- How DEPA provisions on trust, data flows, and inclusivity can inform ASEAN's DEFA and strengthen SME participation.

Presentation 2: ASEAN Perspective on DEFA

 Speaker: *Ms. Prewprae Chumrum, Executive Director, Bureau of Trade in Goods, Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce of Thailand*

- Opportunities and challenges in advancing DEFA as a framework to reduce fragmentation, harmonise digital policies, and ensure inclusion.

Presentation 3: Private Sector Perspective on Cooperation

 Speaker: *Mr. Rifki Weno, Executive Director, ASEAN Business Advisory Council*

- The business community's priorities for inclusive digital trade, highlighting barriers faced by SMEs and how cooperation can unlock opportunities.

Panel Discussion and Q&A

03:00 – 03:15

Coffee Break

Session 4: Policy and Regulation for Inclusive Digital Services

 Moderator: *Mr. Byunsik Jung, Deputy Dean, ADBI*

03:15 – 04:15

Even with infrastructure and skills in place, inclusion depends on the rules of the game. Unequal access, market concentration, and fragmented regulations risk excluding SMEs and vulnerable consumers. Stronger frameworks for competition, consumer protection, and cross-border regulatory alignment can ensure fairness and build trust in digital trade. This session will explore how policies can be designed to expand accessibility and inclusivity.


Presentation 1: Competition Policy in the Digital Age (15 mins)

Speaker: *Mr. Kyohei Yamamoto, Chief Investigator, Digital and International Affairs Policy Group, Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC)*

- Addressing market concentration and preventing monopolistic behavior by big platforms dominating search, logistics, or payments.
- Role of antitrust regulations, interoperability mandates, and open data policies to encourage competition.
- Encouraging healthy competition between global players and local/regional innovators.
- Any regulatory updates or global lessons

Presentation 2: Consumer Protection for Inclusive Digital Trade (15 mins)

Speaker: *Mr. Quan Zhao, Senior Programme Officer, Market Development Division, International Trade Centre*

- Strengthening frameworks for digital payments, product safety in e-commerce, dispute resolution, and transparency in pricing.
- Protecting consumers from fraud, scams, and data breaches in digital transactions.
- Enhancing transparency, accountability, and trust as foundations for digital adoption.

Presentation 3: Interoperability, Liberalization and Market Access (15 mins)

Speaker: *Witada Anukoonwattaka, ESCAP [TBC]*

- How trade agreements and liberalization of digital services can lower entry barriers for SMEs and startups.
- The importance of interoperability across platforms and payment systems to enable seamless cross-border trade.
- How to avoid digital exclusion of rural and marginalized businesses.

Moderated Discussion and Q&A (45 mins)

04:15 – 04:25

Post-event Survey

04:25 – 04:40

Closing Remarks

Byunsik Jung, Deputy Dean, ADBI

