AI summary

Connectivity and Infrastructure Modernisation

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Participants

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Connectivity and Infrastructure Modernisation
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Summary

The session addressed the modernisation of connectivity and infrastructure, focusing on the challenges and opportunities that arise from evolving technologies, sustainability needs, and customer demands. The panel consisted of experts from the telecommunications and technology sectors, offering diverse perspectives on developing scalable, sustainable, and interoperable networks. The discussion emphasised the need to balance technical advancements with societal, regulatory, and environmental considerations as the industry adapts to new demands, such as AI integration and data sovereignty.

Dr Atsuko Okuda from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) highlighted the organisation's role in standardisation and policy support for telecommunications. She underscored ITU's focus on addressing connectivity gaps in underdeveloped regions, particularly through satellite technology, while acknowledging the dominance of cable networks for global data traffic. She discussed the growing challenges associated with urban data centre expansion, including energy consumption and public resistance, and advocated for adopting ITU standards for greener infrastructure. Dr Okuda called for greater awareness and implementation of these solutions, stressing their potential to address both environmental concerns and societal needs.

Andrew Bennett of BT International discussed the increasing complexity of IT systems and the critical role of networks in enabling cloud-first and AI-driven strategies. He explained BT's approach to addressing customer challenges by co-creating scalable, API-driven, and adaptable solutions. Bennett noted the rising importance of edge computing and data sovereignty, particularly for AI applications, and warned about the implications of quantum computing for data security. He emphasised that robust networks are essential for managing these advancements and ensuring operational resilience in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Marcello Brescia from HGC Global Communications discussed the challenges of serving enterprise and hyperscaler customers in Southeast Asia. He highlighted regulatory and infrastructure constraints in the region, as well as the difficulties of maintaining skilled personnel in a context of price erosion in the telecom sector. Brescia identified opportunities in underserved markets like the Philippines, where investments in fibre infrastructure have created value for both businesses and hyperscalers. He also highlighted the tension between private equity expectations and operational realities, noting the need to balance financial pressures with infrastructure development.

Alper Yegin from the LoRa Alliance provided insights into the adoption of LoRaWAN technology, which enables long-range, low-power connectivity for IoT applications. He emphasised the accessibility of the technology, which uses unlicensed frequency bands and supports a wide range of applications, from wildlife tracking to industrial monitoring. Yegin identified education as a key challenge, citing the need to inform stakeholders across the supply chain about IoT implementation. He also predicted greater vertical integration within the LoRaWAN ecosystem as solution providers increasingly combine connectivity with application development.

Looking ahead, the panellists projected significant developments in key areas such as AI, quantum computing, and edge computing. They noted the importance of addressing data sovereignty and regulatory requirements, particularly as AI applications move from cloud-based experimentation to on-premises deployment. The session concluded with a call for greater collaboration across industry, policy, and community stakeholders to ensure that technological advancements are both sustainable and inclusive, addressing not only commercial goals but also societal and environmental challenges.

Takeaways

The Importance of Modernising Infrastructure for Scalability and Sustainability

The session highlighted the dual need for modernising core and access networks to support scalability and ensuring sustainability in network infrastructure. As data demands grow and AI becomes integral, energy-efficient and scalable infrastructure solutions are critical for future readiness.

Challenges of Complexity and Education in Network Modernisation

Panellists emphasised the growing complexity of IT and connectivity systems, which require simplified, API-driven, and customer-centric solutions. Additionally, education across all stakeholders in IoT and network ecosystems was identified as a major challenge to effective implementation.

The Role of Data Sovereignty and Edge Computing in Future Networks

Data sovereignty and localised edge computing were highlighted as pivotal for addressing regulatory and performance needs. These factors will play a crucial role in managing sensitive data, enabling AI inference locally, and ensuring compliance with regional and national regulations.

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