



## Press Release

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# Myanmar Becomes First Asia-Pacific Nation to Join Alliance for Affordable Internet

- Country commits to work towards affordable Internet for all citizens as it becomes fifth country member of world's broadest technology sector coalition
- Will work with A4AI to drive down the cost of broadband and bring millions more online rapidly by developing policies and regulations based on international best practice

The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI - [www.a4ai.org](http://www.a4ai.org)) has announced that Myanmar is joining the Alliance. The Government of Myanmar, the Myanmar Computer Federation and A4AI met this week to ink a Memorandum of Understanding, officially marking the start of this collaborative partnership. One of the least connected countries in the world, the ITU reported that just 1.2 percent of Myanmar's 51.4 million citizens were using the Internet in 2013. While this figure is rising rapidly — the Burmese government has recently estimated that up to 15 percent of its population is now online — many challenges to access remain. Myanmar will work with the Alliance, its members and a diverse range of local stakeholders to create and implement progressive policies and regulations designed to develop an open, robust and affordable broadband market that brings benefits to all of Myanmar's people.

A4AI is the world's broadest technology sector coalition, with more than 70 members — including Google, UK DFID and USAID — from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Launched in 2013 by the World Wide Web Foundation, A4AI and its members are working to drive down the cost of broadband Internet around the world. Recognising that policy and regulatory measures underpin affordability, all members have committed to a shared set of best practices and principles, which also include protecting Internet freedom and the fundamental rights of expression, assembly, and association online. A4AI is working specifically to achieve the UN target of broadband priced at 5 percent or less of monthly income.

After decades of one-party rule, Myanmar has made significant strides in recent years to expand the adoption and use of ICTs among its population — the country abolished its long-standing policy of media censorship in 2012 and deregulated its telecommunications sector in 2013. Despite these efforts, Myanmar remains one of the least connected countries in the world and high broadband access costs keep many offline. A4AI — which is already working in Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique and the Dominican Republic — will now work with a diverse multi-stakeholder coalition in Myanmar to support the development of a forward-looking policy environment that complements



ongoing infrastructure development and enables millions more to access the transformative potential of a free, open and affordable Internet.

Commenting on its new membership in the Alliance, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology U Thaung Tin said:

*“As a part of the Myanmar Government’s continuous efforts on progressive reforms, liberalisation and modernisation of the telecommunication sector lays an important foundation for the country’s social and economic development. Affordable Internet access is one of the basic rights for our people and will help create positive impacts to change the ways we do things in our daily life — from education, business, and trade, to healthcare and government. We are proud to become the first Asia-Pacific nation to join the Alliance for Affordable Internet. I look forward to working closely with all our Alliance members and countries.”*

Sonia Jorge, Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Internet, added:

*“Affordable access to broadband Internet has been proven to accelerate economic growth and deliver important social benefits in diverse areas including health, democracy and education. Unlike many other countries, Myanmar does not have to undo years of bad policymaking or incoherent regulatory regimes to unlock these benefits fast; rather, it can focus on building forward-looking frameworks now and leapfrog other nations that have to revise out-of-date policies. We are delighted to get to work, and are confident that the collaborative development of policies and regulations based on established best practices will result in the steady growth of broadband infrastructure and markets with the goal of increasing affordable universal access in Myanmar.”*