

USTDA, NOW Telecom partner to launch 5G and NBN in the Philippines

Manila, Philippines
January 12, 2023

A Letter of Intent has been signed between the United States of America, acting through the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (“USTDA”), and NOW Telecom Company, Inc. (“NOW Telecom”) at the 5th Annual Indo-Pacific Business Forum in Tokyo, Japan to memorialize the Parties’ intent to work together in support of NOW Telecom’s deployment of a nationwide stand-alone 5G mobile and fixed wireless network in the Philippines.

In support of the project, USTDA, a foreign assistance agency of the U.S. government that connects the U.S. private sector to infrastructure projects in developing and middle-income countries, has agreed to provide a grant on behalf of NOW Telecom to fund a technical assistance (TA) and 5G pilot network launch to support NOW Telecom’s 5G deployment.

The LOI was signed by USTDA Director Enoch T. Ebong along with NOW Telecom Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Mel Velasco Velarde, during a ceremony at the the Annual IPBF co-hosted by the Governments of Japan and the United States, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the US-ASEAN Business Council. The IPBF is a business forum aimed to promote trade, investment and economic cooperation between the United States and Indo-Pacific nations including the Philippines.

The TA will provide NOW Telecom with the necessary analysis, designs and plans for phased implementation of the project and conduct a 5G pilot network at multiple sites in Metro Manila to validate network performance, test 5G use cases, and provide data to inform larger scale deployment. Likewise, the TA includes examination of available various financing schemes including grant, equity, and debt financing from potential donors, investors and financial institutions and assessment of the level of interest of funding organizations, the amount and terms of potential financing, and any specific financial requirements for the full-scale implementation of the project.

“Our goal is to deliver a clean and secure 5G network that will help achieve social and financial mobility, reduce inequality, improve health and education, and spur economic growth for the Filipino people,” said NOW Telecom Chairman and CEO, Mel Velasco Velarde. “Our partnership with USTDA will help us achieve this important mission.”



USTDA Director Enoch T. Ebong and NOW Telecom Chairman and CEO Mel Velasco Velarde



(From left to right, seated) Enoch T. Ebong, USTDA Director; Mel Velasco Velarde, NOW Telecom Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

(From left to right, standing) Gaurav Korde, Regional Partner, Bell Labs Consulting APJ; Guillaume Mascot, Head of Government Affairs APJ Nokia; Verinda Fike, USTDA Regional Director, Indo-Pacific; Atty. Ferdinand Michael Marcos Manotoc, NOW Legal Counsel and Managing Partner of Marcos Law; Francis Xavier L. Manglapus, NOW Corp Vice-Chairman; Engr. Rene L. Rosales, NOW Telecom President and COO; Kristian Noel A. Pura, NOW Telecom Director.

High-ranking government officials from the U.S. and Japan also present at the forum were U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan Yoshimasa Hayashi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Yasutoshi Nishimura, and US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel.

The project advances priorities of the [Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment](#) and the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#), with the goal of developing, expanding, and deploying secure digital infrastructure to power economic growth and facilitate open digital societies.

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