

AI Cooperation Priorities Outlined for Asia-Pacific

Policy Express

By CHEN Chunyou & CUI Shuang

A roadmap for future AI cooperation among APEC economies has been set out around four key priorities: secure AI development and deployment, responsible adoption, innovation-friendly environment, and inclusive cooperation. That's according to a document — the APEC High-Level Forum on AI Statement on Promoting AI Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, released at the 2026 APEC High-Level Forum on AI, a key event of the 2026 APEC Digital Week, held in Chengdu, Sichuan province in southwest China, on July 24.

The statement consolidates consensus on deeper regional AI collaboration and provides a concrete framework for future joint efforts.

APEC's 21 member economies were home to three billion people and accounted for 61.6 percent of global real GDP in 2025, according to official APEC statistics. Their capabilities span several areas of the AI value chain, from model development and semiconductor production to manufacturing.

Acknowledging the diverse and dif-



The APEC High-Level Forum on AI takes place on July 24. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

ferent demands of APEC member economies, the statement encourages experience-sharing to foster responsible development and adoption of AI across the Asia-Pacific.

It urges member economies to prioritize security in AI advancement, and foster innovation that mitigates risks and benefits the public. It also encourages exchanges of best practices

in building reliable, accessible, scalable, trustworthy, secure and resilient AI infrastructure, as well as improving access to digital infrastructure.

For the responsible and popular adoption of AI, the statement advocates empowering economic growth through diverse AI applications and creating a favorable environment for AI integration into all economic and social sectors. It

also calls for promoting accessible education and training resources for all social groups to improve public AI literacy and skills.

To foster a robust AI innovation ecosystem, APEC members are advised to adopt balanced policies that address potential risks while enabling responsible AI application. While upholding security standards, data protection and intellectual property rights, member economies are encouraged to support open-source AI models and projects equipped with robust security safeguards throughout development and deployment.

To advance inclusive and shared APEC cooperation, the statement welcomes strengthened capacity building and knowledge exchange, as well as technological innovation and inclusive economic growth boosted by open dialogue and coordinated efforts involving public and private sector partnerships.

At the forum, China announced it would establish a China Center for APEC Cross-border Data Flow Cooperation. The center will serve as an open and comprehensive platform for policy research, regulatory alignment and industrial services, contributing to digital and intelligent development across the Asia-Pacific region.



Plan to Improve Eco-environmental Monitoring

By GONG Qian

Eco-environmental monitoring underpins ecological and environmental protection. China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the National Development and Reform Commission have jointly issued a plan to improve eco-environmental monitoring during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030).

The plan states that notable progress will be made in building a modern eco-environmental monitoring system by 2030. By 2035, this system will be basically established, with China's comprehensive capacity in eco-environmental monitoring reaching an internationally advanced level.

Five key tasks have been laid out: improving the integrated space-air-ground-sea monitoring network, boosting the quality and efficiency of monitoring support services, strengthening quality management, accelerating the digital and intelligent upgrading of monitoring technologies and equipment, and enhancing law-based monitoring.

Capacity building in six major

fields has been emphasized: operation and management of the national ecological and environmental monitoring network, coordinated monitoring of new pollutants, biodiversity monitoring, national greenhouse gas monitoring, self-monitoring supervision, and digital and intelligent upgrading project.

The plan highlights technological empowerment. It identifies technological innovation and digital and intelligent empowerment as the fundamental driving forces for high-quality development during the period. It promotes the deep integration of new technologies such as

AI into the whole workflow.

Moreover, organized R&D in eco-environmental monitoring will be deepened by leveraging the major national science and technology project for comprehensive environmental management in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

These efforts aim to build clusters of digital and intelligent monitoring equipment, driving the systemic transformation of monitoring networks and the iteration of technological paradigms.



'Next New Three' Industries Thrive

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Customs statistics show that in the first five months of this year, China exported over 10 million robots with a total value of nearly 20 billion RMB to more than 150 countries and regions.

Selling the robot bodies is not enough. Yunji Technology and the School of Hotel and Tourism Management of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University have established the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Yunji Technology Hotel Digital Intelligence Joint Innovation Lab, which explores the pain points of robot application and their solutions to guide robot iteration and development.

Powered by an agent "brain" capable of understanding the physical world and optimized algorithms, some of Yunji Technology's robotic services today operate in a stable, closed-loop manner without the involvement of human operators.

Rise of Innovative pharmaceuticals

Phase II trial results for a three-drug regimen based on disitamab vedotin, China's first homegrown antibody-drug conjugate, were published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* in June, setting a new benchmark for median overall survival among patients with advanced gastric cancer.

Disitamab vedotin, independently developed by Chinese innovative biopharmaceutical company RemeGen Co.,

Ltd. (Yantai), was licensed overseas in 2021 in a deal valued at up to 2.6 billion USD.

Wen Qingkai, executive director of RemeGen, said the company has established three R&D centers in Yantai, Shanghai and California in the U.S., creating an integrated and end-to-end systematic drug development framework. "From the very beginning, we have focused our R&D efforts on 'filling gaps,' and over the years, our annual R&D investment has exceeded one billion RMB on average."

Computing plays an important role in drug development. During the 2026 Zhongguancun Forum Annual Conference, a computing system named "MegaDFT" was released, which calculates the interaction between atoms via quantum mechanics equations, rather

than existing structural databases.

Traditional density functional theory (DFT) methods, limited by computational complexity, can only handle systems consisting of thousands of atoms, and often struggle with the extremely large biomolecules found in living organisms, said Xia Huanhuan, deputy director of ZGCL. "Through the coordinated optimization of underlying algorithms and system engineering, we have achieved hybrid functional calculations at the scale of 100,000 atoms."

This means that more than 99 percent of known protein systems can now be brought within the reach of quantum chemistry-level analysis. "In the future, we will open-source the system to promote the broad application of MegaDFT in fields such as life sciences and pharmaceutical innovation," Xia said.

operators to gain a more direct understanding of the overall operation, further improving construction efficiency and operational safety.

To cope with the common problem of inaccuracies in the laying positioning above three meters, the team is also developing a new-generation ultra-deep detection system to enhance the capability of identifying and positioning submarine cables in complex submarine conditions and deep burial.

The marine environment is complicated and volatile. Only after repeated verification in real submarine conditions and engineering scenarios can technological achievements from laboratories form core capabilities to serve industrial development, Chen said.

Case Study

How a Small Chinese City Turns into German Firms' Hub

By LONG Yun

Six hundred years ago, Taicang, a small city on the south bank of the Yangtze River in Jiangsu province, east China, was the starting point of Admiral Zheng He's voyages to Southeast Asia and beyond. Even back then, Taicang was a gateway for China to connect with the outside world. Today, that spirit of openness continues, but in a different form. The city has become home to a large number of German companies.

The story of one couple explains why so many German businesses choose this place. Christopher Praetzas is an expert in aviation manufacturing and artificial intelligence. His wife Jiang Xiaohua worked in China's automotive industry. For years they had dreamed of starting their own company. They traveled between Germany and China, looking for the right location.

In early 2023, they spent a month visiting cities across China. "But after arriving in Taicang, we immediately knew that we wanted to start our company here," Praetzas told *Science and Technology Daily (SET Daily)*.

What convinced them? Praetzas recalled their first visit, when the government gave them a warm welcome, showed them around the city, and explained the available support policies. At that time, they hadn't even founded their company and were just two people with a vision. Yet they immediately felt welcomed and, as he put it, "We were treated not as who we were then, but as what we could become."

That impression made the decision easy. Praetzas said since starting the company, he has had many rewarding surprises. "The most rewarding one is how well the government and business work together in Taicang," he remarked. He feels the government's strong economic focus every day, something he would never experience back in Germany.

By early 2024, their company, CIT (Taicang) Automotive Technology Co., Ltd., was running at full capacity in the Sino-German Life Science Park. It produces air-suspension compressors for new-energy vehicles. Now in their fourth year in Taicang, the couple are busy with production line upgrades and new growth plans. "We fully located our R&D center here, with a highly skilled mixed Chinese-German team," Praetzas said. "For example, we are the technology leader in central air supplies for automotive, a new industry trend, and this product was fully developed in Taicang."

Their story is not unique. Today, this city hosts a large cluster of German companies, including many "hidden champions" — global leaders in their specialized fields. Over more than three decades, Taicang has worked hard to build its reputation as a model for Sino-German cooperation. It combines

government support, vocational training, and strong R&D partnerships.

German companies in Taicang do more than produce goods. A significant number has set up R&D centers in the city, and most take part in innovation activities like process improvement. Their R&D spending is substantial. Major platforms have also set up operations here.

In 2025, Taicang signed a cooperation deal with Germany's Fraunhofer Society. This allows local companies to work with many of the society's research institutes on specific projects. The model works like this: Companies raise technical problems, institutes provide solutions, and the government offers policy support.

To make cooperation easier, Taicang has set up a network of liaison offices in Germany. It has also opened a dedicated data link between China and Germany, created special service windows for German firms, and solved mobile payment problems for German nationals. These steps form a complete service system for German businesses.

A key reason for Taicang's success is its talent pool. As Praetzas said, "We decided to pursue R&D in Taicang because innovation needs talents, and in Taicang many talented employees can be found. Taicang built a lot of different educational systems, which provides us with a big pool of potential employees." German nationals now make up a significant portion of foreign professionals working in Taicang.

The city introduced Germany's dual-system vocational education model in 2001, the first in China. It set up the country's first training center that follows German standards, and the only AHK (German Chamber of Commerce Abroad) dual-system demonstration base in China. Since then, Taicang has launched China's first dual-system undergraduate program and created the first national standard for this type of education. Today, it is a major examination and training base for German professional qualifications in China. It has trained a large number of skilled managers and technical workers.

This strong talent foundation has been key to Taicang's success, but local officials say there is more to come. Wang Weifeng, director of Taicang's Bureau of Science and Technology, told *SET Daily* that their work is guided by a constant process of exploration, exchange, and implementation. The cooperation models and matchmaking channels are being refined through practice.

He stressed that substantive outcomes come from frequent, in-depth, face-to-face dialogue, not from signed agreements alone. "Our current priority is to make cross-border cooperation more tangible and results-oriented, ensuring that joint efforts deliver concrete technical solutions and foster genuine two-way innovation between China and Germany."



An aerial drone photo taken on June 24, 2026 shows a view of the Sino-German industry-education integration industrial park and surrounding areas in Taicang, east China's Jiangsu province. (PHOTO: XINHUA)