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| **Regional Preparatory Meeting  for WTDC-17 for Africa (RPM-AFR)** | P:\SUP\Logos\Post-150th Anniv\ITU-logo-UNblue.jpg |
| **Kigali, Rwanda, 5 December 2016** |  |
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|  | **5 December 2016** |
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| **Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau** | |
| Regional Development Forum for AFRICA  SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS | |

**Summary:**

The document contains the summary of discussions during the ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa that took place in Kigali, Rwanda, on 5 December 2016, which preceded Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-17 for Africa.

**Expected results:**

N/A

**References:**

N/A

**Background**

ITU Regional Development Forum for the Africa (RDF-AFR) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Kigali, Rwanda on 5 December, 2016 at the kind invitation of the Ministry of Youth and ICT of Rwanda. The Forum was held on the eve of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-17 for Africa (RPM-AFR) to be held from 6 to 8 December 2016. The RDF-AFR’s main objective was to provide a platform for reviewing the implementation of the Africa regional initiatives approved by WTDC-14, to discuss partnerships and resource mobilization activities in Africa, and to define perspective areas in ICT development beyond 2017 within the context of contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The RDF report will be submitted as an information document to the RPM-AFR. More than 200 participants representing more than 30 Member States from Africa and 5 Member States from outside the region attended the Forum. The list of participants can be found [here](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx). This report provides an overview of the issues discussed, as well as the issues identified during the course of the Forum. The report is available on the [RDF website.](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx)

**Opening Ceremony**

Opening remarks were made by the following high-level speakers: Mr Lamin Maneh, UN Resident Coordinator, Rwanda; Mr Brahima Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union; H.E. Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Minister of Youth and ICT, Rwanda.

**Mr Lamin Maneh, UN Resident Coordinator, Rwanda**, welcomed all participants. He stressed that, this meeting provided a platform for discussing the regional initiatives and resource mobilization. He also noted that the meeting would contribute to priority setting by the RPM in preparation for the next WTDC. This meeting is timely as with adoption of the 2030 Agenda. He underlined the importance of bridging the digital divide and recognized ICTs as a good catalyst for the achievement of SDGs. He noted that ICTs may also play an important role in monitoring SDGs. He commended the Government of Rwanda for their vision on ICTs development and also ITU for promoting ICTs worldwide. (The full statement is available [on the RDF website.)](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx)

**Mr Brahima Sanou, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau,** welcomed all participants to the RDF, stressing that the regional initiatives have been and will remain one of his top priorities because it is through their implementation that a difference could be made in the lives of the people on the ground. He noted that the ICT landscape is changing rapidly as reflected in the *Measuring the Information Society* Report 2016. He noted that the report showed that the world was getting more and more connected largely due to strong growth in mobile-broadband uptake He further noted that there was huge investment opportunities for the private sector in connecting the unconnected. He stated that as we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); policy makers, regulators, private sector, development partners and other stakeholders within the ICT ecosystem need more than ever to establish an inclusive, multi-stakeholder, and collaborative dialogue to achieve socio-economic development. As ICT becomes more about people than networks, he underlined the need for establishing a structured dialogue with other sectors of life. He made reference to recent BDT initiatives meant to facilitate with other non-ICT sectors. For instance the ITU-UNESCO Policy Forum which brought together ministers of education and ministers of ICTs for the first time to explore the role that policies and cross-sectoral collaboration could play in fostering innovation in the use of mobile technology to improve the quality, equity and accessibility of education. He also referred to the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-16) which reached out to the financial sector by organizing a Global Dialogue on Digital Financial Inclusion with the support of Gates Foundation. He drew attention to the WTDC-17 that will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 9 to 20 October 2017 under the theme ICT④SDGs which and will be preceded by a series of Regional Preparatory Meetings. BDT Director noted that 2017 will also mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the ITU Development Sector. The anniversary is an opportunity not only to celebrate but also to reflect on the future. Year-long celebrations are planned that will culminate at WTDC-17. All stakeholders were kindly invited to contribute to the preparatory process of WTDC-17. (The full statement is available [on the RDF website.)](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx)

**H.E. Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Minister of Youth and ICT, Rwanda,** welcomed all participants on behalf of the Government. He expressed gratitude to ITU for selecting Rwanda as the host for this important event and thanked RURA for sponsoring it. He recalled that Kigali was the city that hosted the Connect Africa Summit in 2007 where about USD 70 billion commitments were made by stakeholders to develop infrastructure, applications and finance Centers of Excellence (CoE) among others. As a result of the Connect Africa event, the Carnegie Mellon University opened in Kigali. He also noted that Rwanda had hosted the Transform Africa that resulted in the birth of Smart Africa. He noted that Transform Africa would attract about USD 300 billion to Africa and provide a great opportunity for Africa. The Minister underlined the importance of ICTs in the attainment of the SDGs. (The full statement is available [on the RDF website.)](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx)

**The following are highlights of each of the sessions:**

**Session 1: Implementation of the Africa Regional Initiatives approved by WTDC-14**

The session was devoted to presenting the results on the implementation of the five Africa regional initiatives approved by WTDC-14: AFR1- Strengthening human and institutional capacity building; AFR2 – Strengthening and harmonizing policy and regulatory frameworks for integration of African telecommunications/ICT frameworks; AFR3 – Development of broadband access and adaptation of broadband; AFR4 –Spectrum management and transition to digital broadcasting; AFR5 – Building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs.

The ITU Secretariat presented the current implementation status and highlighted challenges. (The presentations are available [on the RDF website.)](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/RPM-AFR/pages/default.aspx)

Questions were raised on fragmented initiatives on African network development in light of the One Africa Network, SMART Africa and other regional network activities in ECOWAS; coordination with universities and academia; linking the Regional Initiatives to the SDGs; financing the implementation of the Regional Initiatives; and on how Regional initiatives take into account the needs for ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The ITU Regional Office for Africa welcomed the questions, explaining that the ITU RO- AFR was discussing with regional organizations how to bring the range of Africa network initiatives together, including sharing a given sub-region’s initiatives with other regions. This includes sharing SADC’s roaming initiative and identifying common elements of the ECOWAS network initiative and the One Africa network. ITU is growing its Academic membership who have a home in ITU and can plug into the ITU Academy platform which includes both face-to-face and online capacity building facilities. ITU is developing new capacity building content, including a Masters in Communications Management, and developing standardized and peer reviewed content.  This allows Centres of Excellence (CoE), whose sustainability and profitability are important to ITU, to offer courses they have developed across the globe. Discussions on links with the SDGs would be taken up during the RPM discussions. It was noted that financing of regional initiatives was important and require the forging of partnerships. While the needs of persons with disabilities are already integrated into Regional initiatives 4 and 5, further discussion with ITU’s ICT accessibility Focal Point could provide further details. Following an enquiry by the delegate of South Sudan on the status of the country’s Wireless Broadband Master Plan, being coordinated by ITU, assurance was given that the Regional Office would follow-up.

**Session 2: Partnership on SDGs and Multi stakeholder Round table**

The objective of this session was to promote partnerships among United Nations Agencies, and other stakeholders, and share experiences on how to cooperate to better help countries meet the SDGs through ICTs. During the roundtable, panelists explored the critical role of ICT and the strategies and mechanisms for resource mobilization and capacity building including the role of the private sector and banks and development institutions. Importance of ICT’s contribution to social/economic development and Nairobi Declaration of TICAD VI was also highlighted.

The session featured presentations from various stakeholders including Member States, UN organizations, financial institutions and the private sector highlighting the different perspectives by the relevant actors, on the different ways and means to contribute in the achievement of the SDGs and overall the role played by ICTs. The session noted that while governments recognize the importance of aligning national development agendas to the Sustainable Development Goals and make the best use of ICTs to achieve SDGs and targets, there were several challenges to be overcome, such as financing, proper planning, and good implementation sustainability and continuity of efforts.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), initiated by the African continent in the late 90s, still remains the only formal UN process focusing on the ICTs for development, that ITU continued to play a leading facilitator role in the multistakeholder implementation of WSIS (along with UNESCO and UNDP). The WSIS Action Lines were acknowledged as the foundation through which the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development could be achieved. In this context, and as per request by the UN General Assembly, the implementation of the WSIS Outcomes and the 2030 Development Agenda would require close alignment. In so doing this would clearly show the pivotal role played by ICT for SDGs. The WSIS-SDG Matrix developed by all UN agencies, was viewed as facilitating alignment of WSIS and SDG processes at the political and implementation level. Regional coordination of the efforts related to the ICT for SDGs was seen as having an important role to play in this context.

The panelists, as well as the participants recognized the fundamental added value provided by partnerships and collaboration, as well as the importance of harmonizing initiatives undertaken at the national and regional level, in order to streamline global efforts toward the achievement of the Goals.

**Session 3: ICT new Challenges and Opportunities for the Region**

The objective of this session was to present and discuss new technology trends, the associated opportunities and challenges and what it all meant for Africa. During this session, interactive discussions on the following topics were conducted: OTT & Telecom economics, IoT & Big Data, Broadband & Smart Cities, IPv6 & Internet Governance, Digital Migration & Digital Dividend.

The session was a panel discussion focusing on emerging technologies and how Africa could take advantage of it. The session highlighted the importance of big data, internet of things (IoT) and cloud computing for Africa. Key issues which were highlighted by the panelists include: capacity building, data –mining, application for environmental monitoring, water resource monitoring, and other applications. A typical example of a big data application project was the 2015 ITU Ebola project launched in Sierra Leone benefiting that country, Guinea and Liberia. Further the importance of ITU support in helping African countries in the migration process from analog to digital was highlighted.

**Session 4: SME and Young Entrepreneurship**

The objective of this session was for the SMEs and Young Entrepreneurs to share experiences. The session also looked at challenges encountered in establishing themselves. Panelist interventions were preceded by a keynote presentation highlighting the importance of SMEs in providing employment opportunities for the youth. It was noted that through SMEs, youth become job creators rather than job seekers.  African countries needed to share best experiences in creating productive SMEs and build capacity of young people to be creative innovators which will promote economic growth in the African continent and achieve the SDGs.

A panel of young entrepreneurs from Cameroun, Kenya, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe highlighted a series of challenges in promoting SMEs and entrepreneurs in Africa, including the skills gap in fostering ICT creators and innovators; regulatory impediments to launching new businesses; lack of support for women-run businesses; the need to overcome the fear of failure in launching new business ideas, and mindsets which discourage innovation. There was also a need to educate both young people and their parents that failing is how we learn and make progress. To overcome these challenges, there was need to promote greater regional cooperation; cross-border trade and financial arrangements; fostering partnerships with bigger companies active in multiple markets that could help SMEs with market access, branding and confidence-building; and create a business culture in the travel and hospitality industry in Africa that caters for young business travelers.

**Closing Ceremony**

This edition of RDF ended around 6 PM (Kigali time). Mr. Jean-Baptiste Mutabazi, representing the Director General of RURA, Rwanda and Mr Brahima Sanou, Director, ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau, spoke during the closing ceremony. The Director of the BDT thanked the host country for all the great facilities and hospitality. He also thanked the participants and interpreter. Mr Jean-Baptiste Mutabazi thanked ITU for choosing Rwanda to host.

Kigali, Rwanda  
5 December, 2016

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