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| Contribution by Rwanda (Republic of) | |
| PROPOSAL FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE READINESS AND PROVIDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP THEIR AI POLICIES AND STRATEGIES | |
| **Purpose**  To request the ITU Secretariat and the Directors of Bureaux to assess the readiness and provide technical support to the least developed countries to develop their AI Policies and strategies with contextualized use cases.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **take note** of the contribution and to **consider** the importance of supporting the least developed countries to develop their AI policies and strategies and increase the AI Capacity building.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  *Council Document* [*C25/56*](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0056/en)*; Resolution* [*214 (Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-214-E.pdf) *of the Plenipotentiary Conference; UN Resolution* [*A/RES/78/266*](https://docs.un.org/A/RES/78/266)*,* [*Global Digital Compact*](https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/en) | |

# 1 Introduction

United Nations Resolution A/RES/78/266 titled “Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development,” calls for safe, trustworthy, and human-centric artificial intelligence (AI) development as well as emphasizes the importance of international governance and cooperation on AI.

Resolution A/RES/78/266 explicitly calls for capacity building in multiple areas, especially in the least developed countries.

The fifth objective of the Global Digital Compact, “Enhance international governance of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity,” commits to building capacities, especially in developing countries, to access, develop, use, and govern artificial intelligence systems and direct them towards the pursuit of sustainable development.

Resolution 214 (Bucharest, 2022) on artificial intelligence technologies and telecommunications/information and communication technologies resolved to continue the work on AI related to telecommunications/ICTs, including studies, information-sharing, and capacity building on AI technologies for increasing the efficiency of telecommunications/ICTs. The resolution also instructed the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Directors of the three Bureaux, to foster information- and advice-sharing to build understanding, particularly for developing countries related to the deployment of AI technologies in support of telecommunications/ICTs and the associated opportunities and challenges.

The global race to develop AI is accelerating, driven by the promise of transformative benefits across sectors. AI is no longer a futuristic concept, it is already being deployed in education, manufacturing, finance, healthcare, and beyond. A report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reveals that over 80 percent still lack a national AI policy.

# 2 Continental initiatives

2.1 Africa is starting to make significant progress in its involvement in multilateral forums. A good example is the recent Global AI Summit on Africa held in Kigali from 3rd to 4th April 2025 under the theme “*AI and Africa’s Demographic Dividend: Reimagining Economic Opportunities for Africa’s Workforce*”. The inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa climaxed with the announcement of the Africa Declaration on Artificial Intelligence, a pivotal turning point for Africa’s AI journey.

2.2 The African Union's (AU) Continental AI Strategy, launched in 2024, provides a foundation for aligning AI development with broader goals, such as Agenda 2063. This strategy emphasises regulatory cohesion, infrastructure development, and building essential skills for AI innovation across the continent.

2.3 Institutions like Smart Africa and AI4D Africa are advancing AI governance, but a dedicated continental body focused solely on AI governance, research, and innovation could further unify stakeholders and harmonise policies. The upcoming Transform Africa summit will be held in Kigali Convention Centre on 22-24 July 2025, under the theme” AI for Africa: Innovating Locally, Impacting Globally”.

2.4 The AI for Good Impact Africa is set to take place on 31 October 2025 during the AI Africa Expo, in partnership with the G20 secretariat. The regional AI for Good Impact event is dedicated to fostering innovation and partnerships within the AI for Good landscape. The event aims to provide a collaborative platform for knowledge sharing and the promotion of AI solutions to solve global challenges.

# 3 Strategic actions and benefits

3.1 To develop the technical standards and build local capacity is crucial for effective AI governance. The ITU emphasises the importance of aligning AI frameworks with UN norms and values, including human rights and inclusion. Capacity-building initiatives can empower the least developed nations to actively participate in AI governance and ensure that AI technologies are accessible and affordable worldwide.

3.2 To ensure that AI development is inclusive, it is essential to address the digital exclusion of the Global South. The lack of commercially available computing power, limited funding for local organizations, and scarce data sets hinder the development of AI solutions tailored to local languages and contexts.

3.3 To ensure that AI strategies are not merely symbolic but transformative, it is crucial to establish mechanisms that facilitate effective implementation and contextual relevance. A foundational step is the adoption of a multistakeholder approach, involving governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia. This inclusive process ensures that AI policies reflect diverse perspectives and address local needs.

3.4 The development of AI governance frameworks tailored to unique contexts is essential. The African Union's Continental AI Strategy provides guidance for countries to harness AI for development, promoting ethical use and minimizing risks. This strategy emphasizes the need for AI systems that reflect Africa's diversity, languages, cultures, and geographical contexts.

3.5 Smart Africa created an AI working group with experts from Member States, the private sector, international organisations, academia, and entrepreneurs, for guiding the development of an AI blueprint for Africa.

3.6 Building institutional capacity is vital. ITU supports African nations in developing digital transformation strategies, enhancing regulatory frameworks, and fostering human and institutional capacity building. These efforts are crucial for creating an environment conducive to AI adoption and innovation.

3.7 To prevent AI policies and strategies from becoming symbolic, it is imperative to establish mechanisms for monitoring and accountability. This includes setting clear objectives, timelines, and performance indicators to track progress. Regular assessments and adjustments ensure that AI Policies and strategies remain relevant and effective in addressing evolving challenges and opportunities.

3.8 Africa's infrastructure deficit significantly hampers its readiness for artificial intelligence (AI) adoption. The overall physical infrastructure financing gap in Africa is about USD 170 billion per year, according to the African Development Bank. Africa’s computing and data storage capacity also remains critically underdeveloped, accounting for only 1% of the world’s total computing and data storage capacity.

3.9 ITU and other stakeholders have identified innovative financing models, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and regional digital funds, as pivotal in bridging this connectivity gap. The ITU's Partner2Connect Action Framework emphasizes the importance of innovative financing in achieving universal, meaningful connectivity. This includes blended finance approaches that combine public and private capital, as well as instruments like green and blue bonds, which are tailored for environmentally sustainable infrastructure projects. Such models are essential in mobilising the substantial investments required for digital infrastructure across Africa.

3.10 Through the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, ITU is working to mobilise the investment needed for digital infrastructure to support meaningful connectivity in Africa and beyond. The majority of P2C pledges over 350 commitments valued at more than USD 38 billion.

3.11 To ensure that infrastructure investments serve communities equitably, several strategies are recommended, including developing clear policies and regulatory frameworks, capacity building and technical assistance, as well as involving local communities in the planning and implementation phases.

# 4 Proposal

Rwanda is requesting the ITU Council to:

– Acknowledge the continental and regional initiatives that foster AI applications, policies, and strategies

– Maintain and enhance ITU’s AI capacity building for least developed countries to bridge the digital divide between developed and least developed countries

– Request the ITU Secretariat and the Directors of Bureaux to assess the readiness of the least developed countries and provide technical support to the least developed countries to develop their AI Policies and strategies with contextualized use cases

– To request the ITU Secretariat to report to the next ITU Council the activities of the ITU towards supporting the least developed countries in matters related to AI.

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