

ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa
Opening speech
Kigali, Rwanda, 5 December 2016
Mr Brahim Sanou,
Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau

- His Excellency Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Minister of Youth and ICT, Rwanda
- His Excellency Francois Kanimba, Minister of Commerce and East African Community Affairs, Rwanda
- His Excellency, Doctor Win Mlambo, Deputy Minister of ICT and Courier Services, Zimbabwe,
- Mr. Lamin Maneh, UN Resident Coordinator, Rwanda
- Permanent Secretaries and other government officials here present,
- Mr Abdoukarim Soumaila, Secretary General of ATU,
- Mr Manuel Costa Cabral, Chairman CEPT com-ITU,
- Representatives of ITU Sector Members,
- Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2016 Regional Development Forum for Africa, here in Kigali.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Rwanda for facilitating and hosting the Regional Development Forum (RDF) and the Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17). It is a great pleasure to be here.

The RDF represents an excellent opportunity for all of us to share our views, engage in interactive discussions on regional priorities and achievements.

During this RDF we will provide you with an update on the implementation of the Dubai Action Plan, with particular emphasis on the regional initiatives.

Let me stress that the regional initiatives have been and will remain one of my first priorities because it is through their implementation that we can make a difference in the lives of the people on the ground.

Ladies and gentlemen

The ICT landscape is changing rapidly. On 22 November, ITU released the *Measuring the Information Society Report*, including the annual global ICT data and ICT Development Index country rankings.

This report shows that the world is getting more and more connected and reveals that there are still huge investment opportunities for the private sector to connect the unconnected.

The reports also shows stronger improvements in the use ICT mainly as a result of strong growth in mobile-broadband uptake globally.

As we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), policy makers, regulators, private sector, development partners and all stakeholders of the ICT ecosystem need more than ever to establish an inclusive, multistakeholder and collaborative dialogue to achieve socio-economic development. The Regional Development Forum is a perfect platform for such dialogue.

We need to establish a structured dialogue with other sectors of life and I am pleased to say that, under my leadership, the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau has taken the lead in initiating such dialogue.

In February this year, for example, ITU and UNESCO, organized a Policy Forum which brought together for the first time ministers of education and ministers of ICTs to explore the role that policies and cross-sectoral collaboration can play in fostering innovation and the use of mobile technology to improve the quality, equity and accessibility of education.

In May, the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) reached out to the financial sector by organizing a Global Dialogue on Digital Financial Inclusion with the support of Gates Foundation.

Also in May, for the first time, ITU and WHO, organized an inter-ministerial round table to discuss the use of ICTs to improve universal health coverage, the adoption of digital technology in the health sector and the importance of continuous cross-sectoral collaboration.

ITU and FAO have developed an e-Agriculture Strategy Guide to help Member States to adopt a strategic approach in making the best use of ICT developments in agriculture.

We must continue such a collaborative approach in order use the full potential of ICT to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs.

ITU has a long history of reaching out to young people. Young people, the leaders of tomorrow and indeed already of today, are the most enthusiastic users and creators of ICTs. They are the ones who will shape the future direction of the ICT industry.

We need to listen to their needs and concerns, and address them. We also need to ensure that they are ready to live and work in a fast changing world driven by technological advances. We will have a session dedicated to SMEs and young entrepreneurs this afternoon.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

WTDC-17 will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 9 to 20 October 2017 under the theme ICT④SDGs.

2017 will also marks 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. We plan year-long celebrations that will culminate at WTDC-17.

I invite all of you to contribute to the preparatory process of WTDC-17.

Ladies and gentlemen:

To conclude let me state that we are in the new ecosystem where ICTs are less about optical fiber, zettabyte, satellite, 4G, 5G, tablets, smartphones or whatsoever but more about streamlining Government processes, bringing education to people in need, extending health services to rural and remote areas, facilitating trade and business and saving lives when natural disasters strike.

Above all ICTs are about people.

Let us make ICTs work for the people.

Thank you.