



THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME-RWANDA



Opening Remarks

Mr. Lamin Maneh,

One UN Resident Coordinator, Rwanda

ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

Monday 5th December 2016, Kigali, Rwanda

Honourable Minister of Youth and ICT, Republic of Rwanda, Jean Philbert Nsengimana

**ITU Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT),
Brahima Sanou,**

**Mr. Abdoukarim Soumaila, Secretary-General, Africa
Telecommunications Union,**

**Dr. Win Mlambo, Deputy Minister for ICT and Courier Services,
Republic of Zimbabwe,**

Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

The Director-General, of Rura, Mr. Patrick Nyirishemana,

Mr Andrew Rugege, ITU Regional Director for Africa,

Representatives of the Private Sector and the Civil Society,

Senior Colleagues from the UN System,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All Protocol observed

MURAHO Mwese, MWARAMUTSE Neza!

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to take part in the ITU Regional Development Forum for the Africa region aimed at providing a discussion platform to:

- Review the implementation of the Africa regional initiatives approved during 2014 World Telecommunication Development Conference organized in Dubai in 2014 (WTDC-14);
- Discuss partnership and resource mobilization activities in Africa; and
- Define prospective areas of ICT development beyond 2017 in the context of contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This workshop is both timely and quite relevant. The critical importance of the ICT sector to human progress in all its dimensions is by now broadly appreciated. There is no doubt about. What is invariably an issue at every stage in the evolutionary process of the sector, how countries could leverage its potentials to meet its development and transformational aspirations. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals last September, we are at such a watershed period.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized that “The spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies”. ICT has indeed the potential to be a key catalyst for achieving the SDGs and the three pillars of sustainable development, economic development, social inclusions and environmental.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed convinced that the development of the ICT sector has a huge potential to foster poverty alleviation, job creation, entrepreneurship, but also to promote digital inclusion and empowerment for all as well as to improve the transparency, accountability and access to and use of public services. ICT has

further a critical role to play in monitoring, predicting, mitigating and adapting to the adverse effects of climate change as well as in disaster risk reduction, prediction, preparedness, mitigation and response.

At this stage, therefore, allow me to commend the Government of Rwanda, represented here today by Honourable Minister of Youth and ICT, Jean Philbert Nsengimana for the outstanding progress the country has made over the last decade in the ICT sector. Under the leadership of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda, President Paul Kagame and Honorable Minister of Youth and ICT, the development of the Information and Communication Technology sector has been a key driver of Rwanda's Socio-Economic transformation agenda towards a knowledge based economy with a potential to create high productive jobs, in line with the country's Vision 2020, EDPRS 2 objectives and the Smart Rwanda Master Plan.

As a matter of fact, the achievements made by Rwanda in the ICT sector over the last decade are very impressive. The connection to Fibre optic cables and the launch of a high-speed 4G broadband network, the development of the National ICT digital Literacy policy, the substantive increase in Mobile and Internet penetration (to respectively 78% and 34%), the establishment of Irembo, a digital public service Delivery Portal aimed at improving the government's service delivery to its citizens and businesses as well as the support provided to the development of ICT start-ups and to building the national ICT skills (through One laptop per child programme, YouthConnekt initiative, Irembo centers, ICT Competitions, TVET etc.) are some of the many examples of the initiatives taken in the ICT sector to transform the national socio-economic development agenda.

Through the support to the Ministry of Youth and ICT and other Government partners, the ONE UN family in Rwanda has been supporting the Government of Rwanda in the development of the ICT sector over the last few years. As part of the UN commitment towards ICT development, the One UN organises each year the "Social Good summit" where discussions between local leaders, entrepreneurs, technical experts, NGO and CSO are conducted to explore how technology, innovation and new media can help achieve greater quality of all global citizens.

Through its Youth and Women Employment Programme, the One UN in Rwanda has been supporting the Government of Rwanda in creating high productive off-

farm jobs through the development of ICT sector. Through the YouthConnekt initiative, the One UN has provided support for the development of a platform that is serving as a channel for Youth and ICT players to contribute to the country's developmental agenda. The platform focuses on innovation and using information and communication tools to connect youth to resources (financial and technical), mentors, and policy-makers, among other things. The YouthConnekt initiative provides training opportunities and awareness raising activities on the use and development of ICT.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests,

These examples underline the strong commitment of the UN family in Rwanda to support the Government of Rwanda in the promotion and development of ICT for sustainable development. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the One UN in Rwanda to continue working hand in hand with the Government to contribute to its development objectives and economic transformation to elevate Rwanda and its youth into a new era of prosperity towards sustainable development.

The development and use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) offers new possibilities in our Continent to empower people, to strongly contribute to poverty reduction by improving poor people's access to education, health, government and financial services, but also to promote local capacity development, foster social inclusion and democratic governance.

The outcomes of this Regional Development Forum with all national ICT actors, experts, private sectors is a great opportunity to come up with some key recommendations in order to foster the development of ICT in Africa and contribute to our continent's economic transformation. I wish to all participants fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention,

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