



ITU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM for AFRICA

9-10 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Regional Development Forum for Africa was successfully held from 9th to 10th September 2015 at Hotel Radisson Blu in Dakar, Senegal with the theme DELIVERING ON AFRICAN REGIONAL INITIATIVES. The Forum was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and hosted by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications of Senegal

A total of 144 participants among which 35 Senegalese (24%) and 109 foreigners (76%) from 27 countries and 19 organizations, sector members, academia and industry attended the forum.

OPENING SESSION

The Forum was officially opened by Hon. Minister ABDOULAYE DIOUF SARR, Minister of Local Government and Development and Territorial Organization of Senegal representing Hon. Yaya Abdoul KANE, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications that due to compelling reasons could not be present. In his speech the Minister ABDOULAYE DIOUF SARR expressed his honor and pleasure to lead the opening ceremony on behalf of the President of the Republic of Senegal H.E. Macky SALL and the Government of Senegal and welcome all participants to Senegal the country of “Téranga” the well-recognized secular hospitality of Senegalese people. He further indicated that Senegal felt honored by the presence of Ministers and other dignitaries that were attending the event. The Minister then briefed the meeting on how the Government of Senegal is implementing the initiatives adopted by SMART AFRICA through the priorities set in the “Plan Senegal Emergent –PSE) and the derived strategic plan for the sector known as “Digital Senegal”.

Mr. Abdou Karim Sall, Director General of Regulatory Authority for Telecommunications and Posts of Senegal (ARTP), the first speaker in the opening ceremony, welcomed all participants to Senegal and to the RDF in particular and express his appreciation to the ITU for having chosen Senegal to host “the Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF). He then briefly pointed to the RDF’s importance as a platform to exchange experiences and reiterated the commitment of the ARTP to the Regional Initiatives and his belief that these initiatives will facilitate the construction of the eco-system for the development of ICTs and Telecommunications in Africa.

Mr. Abdoukarim Soumaila, African Telecommunication Union (ATU) Secretary General, the second speaker in the opening session, reminded the participants on the just ended first preparatory meeting on WTSA and the role of ATU in building up the common Africa position in such a global event. He further reminded the participants of the role ATU is playing in the African preparatory work for the forthcoming World Radiocommunication Conference and other global events.

Mr. Brahim Sanou, the BDT Director also welcomed all participants to RDF, he thanked Senegal and, on behalf of the ITU he thanked the Senegalese Government for hosting the RDF in its usual legendary hospitality “Teranga”. He recognized the presence of the Director of TSB that was in Senegal attending the preparatory meeting for the WTSA 2016 which preceded the RDF and indicated that the arrangement was done in that way to capitalize on the presence of the experts. He then explained that in the context of a very fast and dynamic ICT sector the RDF aims at providing a platform in between the WTDCs for the BDT to report to its members on the progress and receive the necessary feedback. Mr. Sanou used the occasion to inform the participants on the major BDT initiatives and milestones for each Regional Initiative for Africa.

KEY NOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Géraldine Fraser-Molaketi, Vice President of the African Development Bank and Special envoy of the AfDB for Gender Issues, delivered her Keynote Address reiterating the role of the bank as not only a financing institution to fund projects in Africa but also as a conduit of innovation and new ideas on development matters. She said that in the past AfDB has focused its efforts on infrastructure projects at that now the bank clearly understands the importance and impact of ICT services not only in the economies but in people’s lives. She reiterated the bank’s commitment to help African countries not only by funding projects but also with innovations and ideas to address their challenges in the development of ICTs. After giving some examples of projects the bank is financing on which group of countries were perusing common goals e.g. Fiber optics connecting Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville to its neighbors, she challenged the African countries to pursue common goals while dealing with the differences i.e. harmonizing versus uniformity. However, she recognized the need to make use of the connectivity so far achieved by making ICT more usable by the people through business training, access to finance to implement innovative ideas, giving more opportunity for business to women, etc. In this regard she announced that the bank is particularly working on two projects: USD 15 million project to facilitate women access to finance and business training and the African Innovation Fund to provide support to multiple investments or venture capital equity projects.



SESSION 1 – PANEL DISCUSSION – SETTING THE TONE

Session 1 of the forum was a panel discussion on “setting the tone” that was chaired by the BDT Director Mr. Brahim Sanou. The panelists were representatives of Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications of Senegal, African Development Bank, Sonatel and the ITU Regional Director for Africa.

The panel concluded that countries have achieved significant milestones especially with the mobile subscriptions e.g. Senegal 15 million representing 105% tele-density, but the challenge of serving the unconnected people living in remote areas and villages is still being addressed in different ways. Some examples were given on villages with mobile coverage but without electricity where the solar energy for the community was used to charge their mobiles phones, provision of free Wi-Fi access for schools including “daras - madrassas”. The importance of what in Senegal is called “co-regulations” in which all stakeholders are brought together to advance the development of sector was recognized and appreciated. The panel also recognized the TRANSFORMATIVE POWER of the ICTs that goes beyond the economic value to the way people live, hence the role of banks such AfDB to not only provide finance but nurture ideas and innovations. This was linked to the countries commitment to invest in capacity building for Research and Development.

SESSION 2 – IMPLEMENTATION OF WTDC-10 AND WTDC-14 REGIONAL INITIATIVES

In Session 2, the ITU Regional Office for Africa presented the WTDC-10 Regional Initiatives projects implemented in 2014 and as well as those approved by WTDC-14 and implemented since January 2015. After presentation, 3 Working Groups were established to discuss in details the projects and initiatives which need to be put in place in order to implement the 5 regional initiatives:

- Working Group 1 on Regional Initiative 1 (Strengthening human and institutional capacity building) and Regional Initiative 2 (Strengthening and harmonizing policy and frameworks for the integration of African telecommunication/ICT markets).
- Working Group 2 on Regional Initiative 3 (Development of broadband access and adoption of broadband) and Regional Initiative 5 (Building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs.).
- Working Group 3 on Regional Initiative 4 (Spectrum management and transition to digital broadcasting) and the cluster on Innovation and Resource Mobilization.

SESSION 3 and SESSION 4 – BREAK OUT SESSION ON REGIONAL INITIATIVES

During this period the 3 established working groups met separately to discuss and propose ways of implementing the regional initiatives. The following officials were nominated chair the Working Groups:

Working Group 1 - Mr. Peter Ulanga, Tanzania

Working Group 2 - Mr. Jean-Baptiste Mutabazi, Rwanda

Working Group 3 - Mr. Ousseynou Dieng, Senegal

SESSION 5 – REPORT OF THE BREAKOUT SESSION

The overall conclusions and recommendations of the working groups were the following:

Regional Initiative no1: Strengthening human and institutional capacity building

ITU is among others invited to assist countries in the implementation of:

- Conformity and Interoperability (C&I) labs as capacity building, research and development tools
- Training and sensitization programmes for all concerned actors of the analogue to digital migration and spectrum management.

Members are invited inter alia to:

- Integrate Centers of Excellence (CoEs) in their ecosystem and make them the coordination centers for ICT development efforts at national level.
- Encourage collaboration between telecoms/ICT and audiovisual regulators and take the necessary steps for human resources to keep abreast with regard to DTTB migration and digital economy.

Integrate projects on girls in ICT in human resource development programmes at governmental level. Strengthen, through national mechanisms in place, initial and continuous training programmes for applicants in ICT training curricula in order to bring about good expertise in the region.

Regional Initiative no 2: Strengthening and harmonizing policy and regulatory frameworks for the integration of telecommunication/ ICT African markets

The ITU is invited among others to assist countries in:

- Continuing to pursue the HIP AFRICA project following the successful achievements of the HIPSSA project.
- Improving their regulatory policies, taking into account the hot topics of the day: e.g. OTT, regulation on access to submarine cables, international roaming and others.

Regional Initiative NO 3: Development of access to Broadband and adoption of Broadband

The ITU is invited among others to assist countries in the implementation of:

- National Broadband policies
- Content to monetize and fully benefit from the use of broadband networks: e.g. data centers, cloud computing, etc.
- “Green IT” solutions to preserve the environment and finally guarantee sustainable development;
- An inclusive digital strategy taking into account the development of ICT infrastructure, user-services, content and funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability;

Member States are invited inter alia to:

- Work on the development of the universal service by improving the regulatory framework
- Carry out a temporary tax break to encourage operators to focus on the less profitable areas.
- Develop alternative solutions within Broadband implementation
- Develop public-private partnership to develop national backbones

Regional Initiative No. 4: Spectrum Management, Migration to DTT

The ITU is invited among others to:

- Assist countries in finalizing their migration process
- Develop appropriate tools and software for spectrum management.
- Put in place a harmonized tool on spectrum pricing to allow each State to customize it in relation to its social and economic conditions.
- Organize a meeting to promote experience sharing among countries that have already completed their migration process and the ongoing ones.

Member States are particularly invited to:

- Adhere to the project on the implementation of HCM4A framework and tools
- Work bilaterally for spectrum harmonization at the borders and promote the exchange of expertise
- Take judicious measures to better benefit from the digital dividend

Regional Initiative No. 5: Building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications / ICT

ITU is particularly invited to assist countries in:

- The implementation of national strategies on Cybersecurity and awareness raising on cybercrime.
- - The protection of children online through its Child Online Protection Program (COP).

Member States are particularly invited to:

- Ratify (or join) treaties and conventions (Convention of the African Union) on cyber security and on the protection of personal data;
- Strive to equip public institutions that conduct state policy on cybersecurity with more financial and human resources;
- Take suitable measures for consumers' protection;
- Work to strengthen international cooperation in cybersecurity;
- Work with the ITU on security measures for OTT (over the top) services

Funding mechanisms for all identified regional initiatives:

ITU is invited to:

- Assist countries in the elaboration of a collection of procedures and best practices for the funding of ICT infrastructure.

Member States are encouraged to:

- Establish incentives legislation to seize opportunities offered by greater private sector involvement in the funding of ICT infrastructure.

- Approach development banks and bilateral / multilateral partners in order to durably address funding issues related to the development of telecommunications / ICT.

- Work with African finance entities, including the AfDB and sub-regional development banks to better take advantage of the multiple counters available.

SESSION 6 – MULTI STAKEHOLDER ROUND TABLE ON INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS IN DELIVERING REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The Multi stakeholder's roundtable on innovation and partnership in delivering regional initiative was moderated by Mr. Andrew Rugege, ITU Regional Director for Africa and composed of representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Fiber to the Home Council (FTTH), INTELSAT and SONATEL.

After detailed explanation on the activities of the organizations the panelists were representing, following the active questions and answer and discussion with the rest of the participants it was concluded that:

- The private sector will continue to contribute to the implementation of regional initiatives through their social and corporate obligations complementary to their core business. The SONATEL's contribution to Digital Economy in Senegal while partnering with the Government and other stakeholders to assist providing ICT access to schools and other remote institutions was taken as an example.

- The banks have different mechanisms to support countries not only funding the projects but also assisting with capacity building and development of ideas and innovations. Some of mechanism given as examples by the AfDB were ADF (Africa Development Fund) has 70 million dollars in trust funds to support development projects in form of grants and soft loans, ADB Lending funds mainly for lending to private sector.

- The bandwidth demand originating from new applications soon or later will require hybrid systems of fixed broadband networks such as FTTH and wireless system within certain geographical areas e.g. within the house or neighborhood.

SESSION 7 – RDF CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING

In the closing session, Mr. Brahim Sanou, the BDT Director thanked all the participants for having in a short time considered the ways to improve the implementation of Regional Initiatives by the adoption of relevant recommendations and of some projects. He also encouraged the countries to commit themselves by the appropriation and the contribution to the effective implementation of their Initiatives. He further reiterated BDT's role as an executive facilitator and commended the countries for making their experts available to contribute and to exchange experiences between countries. Africa can be transformed only with the firm commitment of Africans themselves, who shall look towards and go in the same direction. Innovation, creativity and solidarity are mandatory for our youth to deserve a better and secure world.

The Forum was then officially closed by the representative from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications Mr. Malick Ndiaye. In his closing remarks Mr. Ndiaye recalled the commitment of the Government of Senegal to achieve the Digital Senegal plan and thanked BDT Director and ATU Secretary General for their availability. He also thanked the BDT for the support and assistance provided to African countries and acknowledged that the RDF has endorsed projects and recommendations and discussed the innovative ways to undertake an efficient and sustainable implementation of the 5 identified initiatives. After thanking all the stakeholders and organizers of this successful meeting he wished all delegates a safe trip back to their respective countries and he declared closed the 2015 meeting of the RDF on behalf of the Minister of Post and Telecommunications , M. Yaya Abdoul Kane.