



Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)

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Geneva, 28 August 2023

To:

- Administrations of ITU Member States
- ITU-D Sector Members
- Academia
- Regulators, and
- Regional and International Organizations, UN System Organizations in the Africa region
- African Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Advisory Groups (TSAG, TDAG, RAG) and ITU-D study groups

Subject: ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-5 October 2023)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to invite you to participate in the Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR) organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and hosted by the Government of Ethiopia. The Forum will be held in hybrid format from 3 to 5 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme **“Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future: Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa through Digital Transformation”**.

The Regional Development Forum for Africa provides an opportunity for the exchange of views between ITU Member States, Sector Members, partners and other stakeholders. RDF-AFR will provide an opportunity for matchmaking regional as well as country specific priorities and partners’ pledges as announced since the launch of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition at the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Kigali, Rwanda. The overall aim is to convert pledges into concrete commitments that will result in the implementation of concrete impactful projects in accordance with the priorities adopted and contained in the Kigali Action Plan (KAP) including Regional Initiatives.

RDF-AFR will provide an opportunity for the ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) to report on the progress that has been made towards the implementation of the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 (WTDC-22) including the [four Regional Initiatives for Africa](#).

In this context, the BDT through the ITU Regional Office for Africa is launching a call for the submission of contributions on their priorities to be presented during the RDF for consideration by participants and partners. These priorities will be posted on the event website before the event. Meanwhile, the partners are encouraged to submit their commitments against the country and regional priorities which will also be posted on the event website or could be announced at the RDF.

All stakeholders are invited to submit their written contributions to be used as basis for discussions, by 15 September 2023. These may be submitted to: itu-ro-africa@itu.int , using the RDF-AFR contributions template available on the [RDF-AFR website](#).

The Forum will be conducted in English and French. To participate, please register online using the link available on [RDF-AFR website](#) no later than **15 September 2023**. This deadline is important for logistical reasons and to give ample time for the processing of visas. For more details about the meeting, please see the attached draft concept note and agenda in the Annex.

The RDF is open for sponsorship. More information about sponsorship opportunities will be available on the event website. The deadline to express interest in the sponsorship package is **15 September 2023**. RDFs are open to all stakeholders willing to strengthen cooperation and partnership among telecommunication/ICT policymakers, regulators, industry, academia, regional and international development agencies, and organizations on specific regional telecommunication and ICT matters.

Please note that RDF-AFR will be paperless. Documents related to this event, including agenda, presentations, and practical information with guidance on how to connect to the online platform, will be available on the website.

For any additional inquiry, please contact, Ms. Anne-Rachel Inné, ITU Regional Director for Africa (anne-rachel.inne@itu.int) and Ms. Christine Sund, Senior Advisor, ITU Regional Office for Africa (christine.sund@itu.int) with a copy to (itu-ro-africa@itu.int).

I look forward to meeting you at this important event.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava
Director

Annex: 1

Annex 1

2023 ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

“Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future: Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa through Digital Transformation”.

organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with
the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia

3-5 October 2023

The 2023 ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR) will be held under the theme “**Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future: Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa**”. In line with the [ITU Kigali Action Plan](#) and for the effective implementation of the 2022 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) outcomes and recommendations, the event explores synergies that include the agreed [Africa regional initiatives](#), projects and other initiatives. The event will review the ongoing and planned initiatives, projects and programmes on the African continent implemented in partnership by all stakeholders, and exchange experiences on how to build on those and create opportunities for further collaboration and implementation.

In particular, the event seeks to:

- Leverage the momentum of the WTDC-22 held in the Africa region in June 2022, the 2022 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted by the Government of Ethiopia in December 2022, the 9th Session of the 2023 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD)’s Niamey Declaration that emphasized the importance of partnerships for transformative change in SDG implementation , the 2023 Transform Africa Summit, and the need to accelerate the implementation of the African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy.
- Understand and discuss the priorities, challenges, and opportunities to advance digital transformation in Africa (including challenges faced by least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS)) and identify possible and practical measures to enhance access to and adoption of digital technologies for value creation in alignment with the priority needs of the region.
- Share good practices and experiences from stakeholders’ activities like the implementation of the Africa regional initiatives 2018-2021, associated programmes, initiatives, partnerships, and projects, and discuss the current Africa regional initiatives (2022-2025) in relation to the Kigali Action Plan (KAP).
- Explore partnerships around the [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development in Africa](#) as well as implementation of [Partner2Connect pledges in African countries](#), among other platforms that are being leveraged on the continent to support the implementation of countries’ digital development ambitions.

Expected outcomes of the event include to:

- Gain a common understanding of digital as an enabler for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, and the urgency to act now.
- Conceptualize an agile approach to sustainable digital transformation and identify concrete methods of collaboration on implementation around common priorities.
- Map existing projects and initiatives with possible identification of new countries co-leading on the Africa regional initiatives.
- Confirm partnerships to accelerate implementation in countries that include Partner2Connect pledges and other initiatives and platforms.

2023 ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

“Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future:
Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa through Digital Transformation”.

Draft agenda

Day 1: 3 October 2023	
08:00-09:00	Arrival and registration
09:00-09:15	Official event opening
09:15-10:30	Power session – Setting the scene. This will be an interactive high-level power session on the vision for digital development and digital transformation in Africa with its people at the centre.
10:30-11:00	Group photo and Coffee/Tea break
11:00-12:00	Session 1 – Digital milestones and the urgency for action now This session will review progress on informing decision making towards achieving Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 - WTDC-22 outcomes and the Kigali Action Plan (KAP) as digital milestones.
12:00-13:00	Session 2 – Universal and meaningful connectivity for all This session will discuss how to enable increased access in Africa to achieve meaningful connectivity for all and to advance digital transformation in Africa, including sustainable connectivity solutions and approaches, energy-connectivity opportunities, and synergies between initiatives.
13:00-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:45	Session 3 – Lessons learned, challenges and opportunities around implementing impactful digital connectivity projects in African countries This session aims to review the status of ongoing projects, sharing of experiences and lessons learnt from among the membership and partners.
15:45-16:00	Coffee/Tea break
16:00-17:00	Session 4 – Accelerating digital transformation for sustainable development Digital innovation improves access to essential services, creates jobs, and drives economic growth. No single stakeholder can alone drive digital innovation. This session will assess efforts to unlock opportunities around innovation and entrepreneurship for digital development, innovation ecosystem building as cross-cutting enablers for digital transformation.
17:00-17:15	Wrap up of Day 1
Day 2: 4 October 2023	
08:00-09:00	Arrival
09:00-09:30	Opening and introductory remarks to the day's programme
09:15-10:30	Session 5 – Inclusive digital development fostering adoption and value creation This session will discuss with membership and development partners, UN agencies and programmes, and stakeholders the key challenges and opportunities that exist for increased adoption of digital technologies and value creation in Africa.
10:30-11:00	Coffee/Tea break
11:00-12:00	Partner2Connect Matchmaking Roundtable 1 – Transforming commitments into impact This session will focus on effective mechanisms for transforming commitments into scaled-up impact of digital on sustainable development in Africa and beyond. This session will introduce the next Partner2Connect sessions which will provide an opportunity for countries to present their priorities and partners their

	commitments to support and finance those priorities within the region's regional initiatives thematic topics.
12:00-13:00	Partner2Connect matchmaking Roundtable 2 – Digital transformation for an enabled digital economy and society This session will discuss how innovation can accelerate digital transformation in Africa. AFR Regional Initiative 1: Supporting digital transformation to usher in a rapid transition to a digital economy while accelerating innovation in Africa
13:00-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:00	Partner2Connect matchmaking Roundtable 3 – Resilient infrastructure and emerging technologies This session will discuss emerging technologies and their ability to contribute to resilient infrastructure deployment. AFR Regional Initiative 2: Implementation and expansion of broadband infrastructure, connectivity, and emerging technologies
15:00-16:00	Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable 4 – Universal, trustworthy, and equitable access and use This session will discuss the need to continue building confidence in the use of digital technologies. AFR Regional Initiative 3: Building trust, safety, and security in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies and protection of personal data
15:45-16:00	Coffee/Tea break
16:00-17:00	Partner2Connect matchmaking Roundtable 5 – Towards digital innovation ecosystems to accelerate progress towards an inclusive digital society Local capabilities in innovation and entrepreneurship are key to unlocking and accelerating ecosystems' impact on cross-cutting sectors for an inclusive and sustainable society. This session will discuss the critical ecosystems that drive relevant local content, services, and digital businesses. AFR Regional Initiative 4: Fostering emerging technologies and innovation ecosystems
17:00-17:15	Wrap up of Day 2
18:00-21:00	Networking and social event
Day 3: 5 October 2023	
08:00-09:00	Arrival
09:00-09:30	Opening of Day 3 and of Day 3 topics
09:15-10:30	Session 6 – Generation Connect in Africa This session is powered by youth who will be sharing their digital development perspectives
10:30-10:45	Coffee/Tea break
10:45-12:00	Session 7 – Roundtable with takeaways and next steps This session will review the takeaways with the aim to conceptualize an agile approach to sustainable digital transformation and identify concrete methods of collaboration on implementation around common priorities.
12:00-13:00	Session 8 – Presentation of key points of the Regional Development Forum Draft Report Key points outcomes and recommendations of the Regional Development Forum will be presented to the participants
13:00-13:30	Closing of event
13:30-14:30	Lunch