# 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"**

**3-5 October 2023**
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

*Organized by the International Telecommunication Union*
*Hosted by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*

# MEETING REPORT

## 1. Executive summary

The ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR) was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) and hosted by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MInT) of the  Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The Forum was held in Addis Ababa from 3 to 5 October 2023.

The Regional Development Forum served as a platform for engagement with members, partners, and youth, for strategic discussions and information exchange as well as country needs-to-pledges matchmaking and partnership development. In addition, RDF-AFR provided an opportunity to highlight and share on existing and upcoming programmes, projects, initiatives and activities where collaboration can be strengthened, and lessons learned can be harnessed. This included matchmaking of partner pledges and country needs under the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and sharing of information pertaining to ITU's initiatives such as the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development, GovStack, ITU Academy Training Centres (ATCs), Digital Transformation Centres (DTCs), infrastructure mapping, among others. The contributions to RDF-AFR and pledges and commitments from Partners can further serve to inform other ITU platforms of ongoing work and opportunities by stakeholders in ITU Member States. They can inform ITU Study Groups, the African Telecommunications Union (ATU)'s processes, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030), the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

RDF-AFR highlights and the detailed RDF-AFR agenda with speakers can be found in **Annexes 1 and 2** to this summary report.

The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition was a key focus of RDF-AFR. It reached its 800th pledge for a total value (as of 5 October) of USD 31.88 billion globally, with 261 of these pledges valued at USD 12.42 billion targeted for implementation in African countries.

A regional call for contributions was made in preparation for the Forum which served to concretize additional pledges. Notably, in the build up towards RDF, 27 contributions were received resulting in 20 new Partner2Connect commitments for Africa. The discussions during RDF-AFR served to facilitate further pledges and the matchmaking between needs of the 44 Member States in sub-Saharan Africa and the pledges from partners from across the globe. **Annex 3** has the list of contributions received and **Annex 4** features the Partner2Connect  RDF-AFR matchmaking report. **Annex 5** shares the text on the ITU Regional Initiatives for Africa and **Annex 6** includes links to presentations and material shared during the Forum.

## 2. Participation and contributions

RDF-AFR welcomed around 300 participants from 41 countries. Participants represented ITU member states, sector members, academia, United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations, youth representatives, entrepreneurs from the region, partners, and project collaborators.

ITU received a total of 27 contributions from ITU members and non-members for the 2023 edition of RDF-AFR. The contributions are listed in **Annex 3** and shared on the RDF-AFR website.

## 3. Opening and appointment of RDF-AFR 2023 Chair

The RDF-AFR 2023 was officially opened by Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) and H.E. Huria Ali Mahdi, State Minister to National ICT and Digital Economy Sector, on behalf of H.E. Belete Molla, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The speakers highlighted that digital technology is the catalyst for sustainable development in the Africa region. It is therefore important that all stakeholders come together, double their efforts, and leverage the different tools provided by digital technologies. Investments in infrastructure are fundamental and strengthening of digital skills will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate and contribute to the digital economy. While each country has specific priorities, a common working approach amongst different stakeholders to minimise silos and the use of common digital platforms will enable access to information. Promotion of innovation through digital solutions will play a key role in addressing the challenges in areas such as health care, education, agriculture, and climate change. By leveraging digital technologies, building partnerships, and strengthening efforts across all stakeholders, we can build a sustainable, equitable and safe future for all.

The Regional Development Forum for Africa brought together stakeholders to brainstorm, share and exchange on ideas to drive digital transformation in the region. The RDF this year was noted as unique due to the matchmaking opportunity within the framework of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition.

Digital was emphasized as a catalyst to achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063 with enablers like Artificial Intelligence and big data to support the digital transformation process through improved decision-making and enhanced policy and regulation. The digital divide is still wide with 2.6 billion people who are still offline with the majority from the Least Developed countries (LDCs). Africa has the largest number of LDCs. It will require combined efforts and strong partnerships to ensure equitable access for everyone. In line with the SDGs and Agenda 2063, ITU recognizes that countries have unique strategies and priorities that all contribute to the achievement of digital transformation. The five thematic priorities from WTDC-22 include: Affordable connectivity for all, Enabling policy and regulatory environment to create right policy frameworks to promote investment, Digital transformation as an agent to development, resource mobilization and international cooperation to pull resources and not duplicate efforts and inclusive and secure telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development and to ensure safety while online. These priorities, through different initiatives and activities, aim to support countries in implementing their respective strategies and priorities and achieving sustainable digital transformation.

Africa is a young and dynamic continent, and this presents a unique opportunity to embrace digital technologies and transform various sectors to deliver priority digital services. Significant progress has been made in the RDF host country Ethiopia, for example, that includes enacting a digital transformation strategy, liberalizing the telecommunication sector, launching a national Digital ID system, developing a digital panel ecosystem, creating e-commerce and other digital services, investing in research and development. Nonetheless, there is still more that needs to be done in the world, including increased infrastructure investment, addressing the challenges of privacy and security while online, climate change among others. It is important that digital technologies are used in a sustainable and equitable manner and all stakeholders work together to promote digital literacy for all. The Regional Development Forum provided a platform to discuss the different challenges and develop innovative solutions to accelerate digital transformation in the region.

Following the opening of Engineer Balcha Reba, Director General of Ethiopian Communications Authority was appointed as the Chair of the 2023 Regional Development Forum for Africa. Eng. Reba in his remarks recognized the key role of the RDF in driving digital transformation in the Africa region and expressed gratitude to the ITU for bringing the RDF to Ethiopia.

## 4. High-level segment

Different factors critical to digital transformation in Africa to ensure that no one is left behind were highlighted by the high-level panel, chaired by Dr. Zavazava. High-level panelists included:

- H.E. Huria Ali Mahdi, State Minister to National ICT and Digital Economy Sector, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- Néfertiti Mushiya Tshibanda, Permanent Representative of the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa
- John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU)
- Didier Nkurikiyimfura, Chief Growth and Strategy Officer, Smart Africa Secretariat
- Mactar Seck, Chief of Innovation and Technology Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- Ramiz Alakbarov, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia

The factors included: 1. **Meaningful and affordable connectivity** was discussed as challenge given high prices of services, taxation on transactions and equipment; 2. **Digital inclusion** to engage the youth, taking into account, gender mainstreaming, people with disabilities, the elderly and marginalized groups, was noted as fundamental; 3. Developing and strengthening **digital skills** to build the necessary capacity for all to use the different tools offered by digital technologies; 4. Availability of **credible data and statistics** to enable accurate measurements to support capacity building and delivery of tailored training programmes; 5. Establishing **meaningful partnerships** as essential to foster a shared vision that can transform people's lives using digital technologies.

Increased stakeholder engagement across the digital ecosystem in the different countries is important to advance digital inclusion and to address the challenges faced on the continent that include inadequate connectivity, high costs of devices and services, access to data and cybersecurity. Capacity building is also critical especially for the youth that forms the largest portion of the population in Africa and with regards to the use and deployment of emerging technologies such as AI, block chain and others to serve development needs. Notably, collaboration among stakeholders and policy harmonization can avoid duplication and leverage comparative advantage through national coordination mechanisms and through enhanced sharing in the region. Digital transformation involves a range of activities that include providing access to digital infrastructure, access to devices, training opportunities, developing and deploying digital solutions to address social and economic challenges and thus should take a holistic approach. Digital technologies have revolutionized the way of working, for example, through the availability of digital payment platforms and the digital ID that is a central anchor of delivering social services and goods to citizens.

Unemployment is a major challenge among the youth as most of them have successfully completed the education system yet they do not have the right digital skill set to enable them to get employed. To address the challenge of youth employment, it is important that leaders ensure that the youth are linked to the digital ecosystems to enable them develop and strengthen their digital skills. With agriculture as a main backbone in Africa, there is need for the youth to embrace agricultural practices and develop knowledge and skills across the priority sectors and contribute to the digital economy. Digitalization is a key enabler to accelerate socio-economic development and create opportunities for the population. It is important to leverage the demographic dividend in Africa by ensuring the youth are well equipped with the necessary skills to actively engage and contribute to the digital transformation process, noting the rapid advancements in digital technologies. While there are various initiatives, these are still conducted in silos but should be brought together for higher impact. For example, with the different initiatives on digital ID, digital interoperability to positively impact other sectors such as ecommerce within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for effective cross border trade, is essential. Working together within and among

countries, with private sector, academia, and the broader digital ecosystem, will accelerate digital transformation across the region.

## 5. Key takeaways from session discussions

The Regional Office for Africa shared on the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22), and reported on the implementation status of the outcomes of WTDC-22 in the region, with an emphasis on the four WTDC-22-approved Regional Initiatives (RIs) for Africa.

Below is a summary of the key takeaways from session discussions as this pertains to the implementation of activities, projects and initiatives by ITU and partners in the region towards the realization of the Regional Initiatives for Africa. Resource and partnership mobilization through pledges and commitments towards their implementation is further encouraged and welcome.

### 5.1. Implementation of Regional Initiatives

#### 5.1.1. AFR Regional Initiative 1: Supporting digital transformation to usher in a rapid transition to a digital economy while accelerating innovation in Africa

Digital transformation is a process of integration of digital technologies for transforming people's lives. The characteristics of a national digital transformation strategy should be coherent, holistic, inclusive, collaborative, data driven, ambitious, measurable, and agile. Countries are facing challenges to engage various stakeholders from the outset at the national level and during implementation. Key enablers like electricity and connectivity remain impediments to successful roll out, while the need to stimulate the demand while enhancing the supply were brought up as good lessons learned. Infrastructure mapping, gap analysis, and planned network roll out were noted as fundamental for achieving reaching affordable access.

Some supporting factors like ubiquitous networks and computing resources, use of green and hybrid energy solutions, the promotion and development of local content with associated infrastructure, and the needs for capacity building, are important meaningful connectivity. To advance digital transformation, design and delivery of tailored and targeted programmes is key to develop and strengthen digital skills for different target groups. Different initiatives across the continent are being implemented to empower citizens and in particular the youth, girls and young women to embrace emerging technologies and to participate and contribute to the digital economy.

With the advancement of digital transformation and increased access to digital technologies, awareness creation and building capacity on cybersecurity is critical for protection against harmful practices while online. Implementation of Digital ID systems was highlighted as important for digital transformation, to facilitate access to digital services across various platforms.

Emerging technologies present different opportunities for innovation to advance digital transformation. There are several innovation startups in the African continent that require support that ranges from financial support, mentorship programmes, business coaching among others. Digital financial inclusion was noted as a driver for digital transformation and digital inclusion with increased entrepreneurship opportunities among the youth, young women and marginalized communities and that enables countries to benefit from AfCFTA.

Mobile money has expanded financial services to the underserved communities and unlocked innovative business models creating opportunities for employment. The development of continental policies, strategies and frameworks enable digital transformation with emphasis on inclusive growth and sustainable development with Africa not only as a consumer but as a producer in the digital economy. Digital interoperability is essential with consideration of the role that digital plays across various sectors for example education, health, agriculture, and others. Establishing partnerships is essential for effective implementation of the different initiatives and for sustainability both at national level and regional level. Resources to advance digital transformation are limited and therefore collaboration and taking stock on a regular basis of the different ongoing initiatives on digital transformation can identify existing gaps and methods to address them. A call for increased partnerships was expressed to accelerate sustainable digital transformation and advance digital inclusion in the Africa Region. Cross-border integration and collaboration, development of

local digital content, common and shared infrastructure and innovation will facilitate digital transformation for an inclusive digital economy.

### 5.1.2. AFR Regional Initiative 2: Implementation and expansion of broadband infrastructure, connectivity and emerging technologies

Broadband technology has the potential to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural communities in Africa, providing vital resources and services to previously underserved areas. Its impact goes beyond just internet access and touches on several crucial aspects of economic, social, and educational development. These aspects encompass access to information, disaster preparedness and response, economic empowerment, healthcare services, agricultural advancements, skill development, entrepreneurship, and innovation just to name a few. However, despite the widespread benefits it brings to society and the economy at large, Africa's broadband coverage still ranks among the lowest worldwide.

By prioritizing investments in broadband infrastructure and connectivity, a more inclusive society can be achieved, affording everyone the opportunity to thrive. For example, with access to high-speed internet, African businesses and industries can not only compete on a global scale but also draw in investments, thus fuelling economic growth.

A mix of technologies is needed for achieving this goal. Fiber to the Home (FTTH) is successfully deployed in some African countries like South Africa and Kenya, resulting in significant enhancements in speed and connectivity. Similarly, High Altitude Platform Stations (HAPS) have proven effective in linking remote areas, with companies successfully testing solutions implementation. Additionally, implementation of 5G technology is ongoing in several countries on the continent. Broadband through satellite has been proven to be efficient for reaching rural and remote areas as complementary to terrestrial networks. Deployment of emerging technologies, such as big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, drones, nanotechnologies, blockchain, to support digital transformation efforts is progressing in countries on the continent. International and regional organizations and financial institutions, like the World Bank and the West Africa Development Bank (BOAD), are involved in funding infrastructure projects across Africa to speed up the deployment of broadband. West African Development Bank (BOAD) strategic plan DJOLIBA (2021-25)'s ICT component is dedicated to accelerating digital technologies and broadband infrastructures in West Africa. World Bank supports connectivity initiatives across the continent. For example, in the Sahel region, the Smart Village in Niger project aims at stimulating rural growth and promoting digital inclusion by connecting over 2075 villages to high-speed internet, while the WARCIP project in Mauritania enabled the deployment of over 1,700 kilometres of optical fiber and in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad thousands of fiber optics backbones are being deployed allowing the (digital) opening up of the localities covered in these beneficiary countries. What became clear from the discussions is that widespread broadband connectivity demands a unified front, with governments, the private sector, and international donors pooling their resources and expertise. Governments play a pivotal role in setting the regulatory framework, policies, and standards that enable the seamless deployment of broadband infrastructure. Their responsibility is to create an environment that fosters investment and innovation. They are also expected to collaborate actively with private entities to ensure that broadband services reach even the remotest areas. The private sector, on the other hand, brings to the table innovation, expertise, and the necessary resources for the actual implementation of broadband projects. Their involvement ensures that technology is harnessed to its fullest potential, and services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of communities. Their participation in the development process fosters healthy competition, which ultimately benefits consumers through improved services and affordability. International partners complement these efforts by providing financial support and technical expertise. Their involvement is crucial, especially in regions where resources may be limited. By offering funding, knowledge-sharing, and best practices, they facilitate the acceleration of broadband deployment, aiding countries in bridging the digital divide. Human capacity building has been proven to be pivotal to broadband connectivity and emerging technologies uptake on the African continent. To that end, Academia has a key role to play in this regard by mainstreaming broadband technologies and emerging technologies in their training curricula to help constitute a critical mass of actors able to take up the

challenges related to their development in Africa. The sharing of countries experiences was an asset to the session as it serves as practical guidance to others best practice and to showcase. Burkina Faso and Senegal shared their experience on national fibre optics backbone deployment and connectivity to submarine cables, cutting edge data centre creation, digital technological parks creation, virtual submarine cable landing point creation for a landlocked country like Burkina Faso. Nigeria presented their pledges encompassing among others, infrastructure development, connectivity for schools, hospitals, rural and underserved areas in general to for matchmaking and look for partnerships to make them happen.

### 5.1.3. AFR Regional Initiative 3: Building trust, safety and security in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies and protection of personal data

The digital revolution is altering the landscape of threat activities in at least two significant ways. Firstly, vulnerabilities stemming from the technical aspects of cyberspace are proliferating. Secondly, it is reducing communication costs, thus accelerating the widespread adoption of digitally empowered technology. These factors have security ramifications for African governments, citizens, and non-state entities, including criminal networks and violent extremist organizations. The important roles that different actors play in building trust, safety, and security in the use of ICTs at the regional and national level was at the heart of the session.  The African Union Commission, as a regional organization, established a cybersecurity experts' group 'AUCSEG' as an advisory body for regional cybersecurity issues. This group has recently undertaken various initiatives, including advocating for the adoption and implementation of the Malabo Convention, making recommendations for its revision and updates. Additionally, they have presented an initial draft of an Africa child online protection policy, offered support for African contributions to the UN Ad Hoc Committee responsible for drafting a UN Cybercrime Convention, and started the development of an Africa Cybersecurity Strategy. The "Cybersecurity Landscape in Africa: Assessment of Gaps and Priorities" report revealed that African nations are inadequately prepared to counter cyber threats. Within the context of data governance, the Smart Africa Secretariat has maintained a close collaboration with the African Union and has actively participated in the taskforce responsible for crafting the framework, including the development of data protection and privacy guidelines. When examining the landscape of data protection and privacy across the continent, only 37 countries have enacted data protection laws, and out of those, only 23 have established data protection authorities. 14 countries are currently in the process of establishing such authorities, which, will significantly affect the implementation and enforcement capacity of these laws.

One of the significant hurdles encountered in this journey is the harmonization of diverse data protection, privacy laws, and data governance laws across the continent. Interestingly, most of the available laws have in common that they incorporate internationally accepted principles that outline the rights of data subjects and lay the groundwork for the establishment of data protection authorities.

Safeguarding Ethiopia's critical infrastructure, the Information Network Security Administration (INSA) serves as the home for the national and sector-specific Computer Incident Response Teams (CIRTS), and hosts the Public Key Infrastructure, a Cybersecurity Center of Excellence, and a data centre. In addition to its incident response capabilities, INSA offers a wide range of services such as Deep Packet Inspection (DPI), fraud prevention, management of national secure communication networks, anti-money laundering efforts, digital forensics, cybersecurity governance and management, cybersecurity awareness and cultural development initiatives, radio and TV programs, cybersecurity evaluations and audits, ICT monitoring, and the provision of Digital IDs, among others.

Malawi is investing in capacity building and awareness programs designed to enhance the cybersecurity skills and knowledge of its citizens. These initiatives are aimed at educating individuals, businesses, and government entities on the best practices for safeguarding against cyber threats and fostering a cybersecurity-conscious culture.

Child Online Africa is playing a crucial role by providing a reliable platform for young people to engage safely online. Many young children are data subjects, yet there is a lack of adequate provisions for their protection. Additionally, there is a shortage of legislation, regulation, and active engagement in cyberspace regarding

child safety. Child Online Africa also focuses on citizenship education and digital citizenship education to equip young individuals with essential skills. These educational initiatives aim to integrate cybersecurity and digital citizenship topics into the curriculum, empowering young learners to navigate the digital world responsibly and safely. Playing a complementary role at the national level, the Ethiopian Cybersecurity Association work towards mitigating cyber risks and enhancing the digital ecosystem in Ethiopia. It was established in response to identified critical challenges and opportunities, focusing on infrastructure, software development, and the acquisition of cybersecurity knowledge and skills.

The National Cybersecurity Authority (NCSA) in Rwanda oversees and coordinates cybersecurity activities at the national level. The Government of Rwanda has enacted laws for the protection of personal data and privacy. These laws designate the National Cybersecurity Authority as the supervisory body responsible for implementing this legislation. Consequently, the NCSA has an opportunity to collaborate with the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and ITU to receive support in developing a new national cybersecurity strategy. This strategy will be informed by assessments such as the Cybersecurity Maturity Model for Nations and the National Cyber Risk Assessment, with the ultimate goal of devising an action plan to safeguard critical infrastructures and other assets.

Collaboratives efforts and commitments should also be put to leveraging Africa's unique strengths, including its youthful population and innovative spirit, to create a resilient, secure, and inclusive digital landscape. The display of collective determination and strategic direction provides compelling grounds for optimism regarding the realization of a safer and fairer digital future for Africa.

### 5.1.4. AFR Regional Initiative 4: Fostering emerging technologies and innovation ecosystems

Strong ecosystems can accelerate the needed local content and services to drive an inclusive and equitable digital economy and society.

As infrastructure provider across Africa, Liquid intelligent technologies, operating in 15 African countries, is building technology around the Internet and sees as its core role contributing to the establishing of the enabling ecosystem. The hub-to-hub initiative serves a role in communities, especially amongst young people, in providing resources and providing a place for people to come and learn more about entrepreneurship and innovation. To reduce the cost related to infrastructure and connectivity, Liquid provides ultrahigh speed dedicated Internet lines at a reduced costs for innovation hubs with a focus on the rural hubs and outside of the main cities.

In Ethiopia the digital innovation ecosystem is seen as critical to produce and utilize digital solutions. The national Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy aims to create the digital innovation ecosystem which are mainly driven by digital start-ups. The ministry is shaping regulatory environment to incentivize the ecosystem by, among other things, launching city-based initiatives which will help citizens address their own issues.

In Zimbabwe, the Universal Service Fund supports initiatives such as the community information centres, broadband connectivity to schools and clinics and the promotion of digital literacy and innovation through the innovation drive. The innovation drive works to identify and nurture innovative talent, transforming ideas, creative ideas into viable and impactful ICT solutions.

Intel works towards a digital future that is equitable, accessible, inclusive for all. Globally, Intel has made a pledge on M50 (digital participation for the next 50% of the unconnected) projects and other programs supported by an alliance with 50 partners from Fortune 500 companies and NGOs and academia. The project is part of Intel's technology initiative aiming to bring access to affordable digital content applications and services to the unconnected. Zambia is serving as pilot country. Intel also launched AI for future workforce for current workforce initiative for youth in South Africa and in addition to that, Intel collaborated with Smart Africa to build the capacity of Africa government officials and decision makers on digital readiness for leader programs.

The UN Technology Bank for LDCs serves to support science, technology, innovation for sustainable development in the 46 least developed countries. As an example of ongoing work, the lab project seeks to

enhance digital skills training for boys and girls. An enhanced model of the training of trainer's centers, based on Turkiye's model and fine-tuned to suits the needs of high school students for 18 years and above has been to be more accessible to local realities in our countries and the youth and create the opportunity to develop digital skills, capacity development, and enable them to develop solutions to local, global challenges.

## 5.2. Youth engagement

Youth engagement was prevalent across the RDF-AFR sessions, with Generation Connect Youth Envoys serving as rapporteurs and presenters in sessions and as authors of a joint contributions to the Forum. A dedicated 'Youth-driven Digital Development in Africa' session co-created by youth took place on 5 October and was moderated by Saba Beyene, Generation Connect Youth Envoy from Ethiopia.

The panel comprised youth namely: Bethlehem Wondimu Abo, Founder and Creative Director at Be8ty, Youth entrepreneur EIF-ITU project; Krshtee Sukhbilas, Mauritius, Winner of the GC Youth Summit Hackathon; and Horace Chipembere, Managing Director of Her for Tech in Malawi, Winner of the Generation Connect Youth Summit Hackathon (Presentation of Youth-led initiative).

The session aimed to foster an intergenerational dialogue on critical digital transformation issues. The session objectives were four-fold: Youth Empowerment: Empower young Africans with the knowledge, skills, and resources for leadership in digital development. 2) Knowledge Exchange: Facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices among youth, experts, and policymakers. 3) Policy Advocacy: Encourage youth-led discussions on digital policy development 4) Networking: Foster collaborations and partnerships between youth and digital organizations.

In opening the session, Dr. Zavazava highlighted the importance of engaging Africa's youth in digital transformation. He stressed the need for innovative strategies to engage youth in ITU and other global and regional initiatives, ensuring their meaningful involvement in shaping the digital landscape and addressing African youth's unique challenges.

John Omo, the Secretary-General of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) emphasized the pivotal role of African youth in driving the continent's digital advancement. He advocated for active youth participation, positioning them as equal partners alongside existing digital leaders.

**Mentorship and capacity building:** The representative from SUP'PTIC, Cameroon emphasized the importance of mentorship and capacity-building programs for African youth in digital development. She highlighted initiatives in Cameroon, such as the SUP'PTIC Business Academy (SBA) and the Cameroon Digital Innovation Centre (CDIC), which are instrumental in promoting innovation and digital transformation. Cameroon Digital Week and the Tony Elumelu Foundation were showcased as vehicles to empower African entrepreneurs. These initiatives are crucial in mentoring and capacity-building, vital for advancing digital progress across the continent. **Her for Tech Youth-Led Digital Inclusion Initiative:** Horace Chipembere, also a Generation Connect Youth Envoy from Malawi, spotlighted his successful youth-led digital project, the "Her for Tech" initiative. Its mission is to bridge the Gender Digital Divide in Malawi by promoting equal digital opportunities for women and girls through innovative programs. He underlined the willingness of youth to collaborate and drive Africa's digital progress, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity. **Youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship:** Bethlehem Wondimu Abo, a young entrepreneur from Ethiopia and entrepreneur in EIF-ITU project, stressed the vital role of African youth in driving innovation and entrepreneurship within the digital development sphere. She highlighted the potential for youth-led initiatives to catalyse economic growth and job opportunities across the continent. Her message emphasized the urgency of harnessing the energy and creativity of this demographic for Africa's sustainable development.

**Government and regulatory bodies support:** Amah Vinyo Capo, the representative from Autorité de Régulation des Communications Electroniques et des Postes (ARCEP), Togo, explored the role of governments and regulatory bodies in creating an enabling environment for youth-led digital development initiatives and startups. He emphasized the need for an ecosystem that fosters innovation, given Africa's significant youth population and its potential for digital innovation. Key obstacles such as limited access to digital education,

improving tech ecosystems, and enhanced continental coordination, as outlined in Agenda 2063, must be addressed to unlock this potential fully.

**Collaboration and support:** Ms. Anne Chantal MVOGO , the representative from Réseau International Femmes Expertes du Numérique/Cameroun (RIFEN) highlighted the significance of collaborative efforts among governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations in supporting youth-led digital development projects across Africa. She emphasized their pivotal role in providing financial backing and extending support to these initiatives, creating a platform for innovative strategies and partnerships that empower Africa's youth to drive digital transformation.

**Empowering young women:** Krshtee Sukhbilas, a young Generation Connect Youth Envoy from Mauritius, shared her inspiring journey as a young female digital activist. She shed light on her unique obstacles and discussed her strategies for overcoming them and underscored the importance of empowering young women to thrive in the digital age and emphasized the need for gender inclusivity in Africa's digital development.

**Youth contributions to the RDF:** A Generation Connect Youth Envoy from Côte d'Ivoire, presented a contribution from youth to the RDF, emphasizing bridging the digital divide, the need for a skilled workforce, and youth-driven initiatives.

Emphasizing an increased awareness of youth's role in digital development and proposing concrete action Items for collaboration and support, strengthened by new partnerships and networks, the session called for enhanced knowledge and skills for all to leverage the digital economy and society. It also instilled a sentiment of hope for the future, inspired by youth-led digital projects. Stakeholders' commitment to youth leadership in digital development is already contributing to a brighter digital future for Africa, while continued support is needed.

### 5.3. Collaboration and partnerships

The need for enhanced collaboration and innovative partnerships were reiterated throughout the discussions. As the enablers and barriers to realizing a digital Africa where technology and digital inclusion is yet to be a reality for all, cooperation and mutual sharing was brought forth as a means to achieving more through joint effort and united resources. Key actors such as governments, regulators, and private sector all have a role to play towards collectively contributing to strong ecosystems that accelerate the creation of required local content and services to achieve an inclusive and equitable digital economy. Collaboration is needed to provide digital skill training to all of Africa regardless of age, gender, and communication. Collaboration is a prerequisite to avoid the duplication of effort and optimize the use of limited resources. Collaboration among agencies in countries and across the borders is essential to establish networks to share and exchange information to strengthen cybersecurity, address cybercrimes and related threats to advance digital inclusion through a safer online environment.

With a multitude of initiatives and emerging technologies on AI, block chain and others at the forefront, cooperation and collaboration is furthermore important to maximize shared learning, leverage comparative advantage and to enable the harmonization of policies and regulation. Peer-exchanges among countries in the region across different areas, such as infrastructure mapping, connectivity of school, innovation ecosystem building and cybersecurity were deemed a necessity going forward.

Driving engagements to establish partnerships, striving for meaningful cooperation can accelerate progress towards bridging digital divides on the continent and achieving universal access for all.

### 6. Partner2Connect matchmaking and next steps

The matchmaking exercise, which was a highlight of the P2C Roundtable sessions, was based on the matching of the regional priorities and country specific needs with the commitments made by the P2C partners through their pledges, contributions before and during the roundtables, resulting into concrete actionable projects for implementation in the region.

During the Partner2Connect Roundtables, partners announced commitments for several countries, following pledges already made. Examples are elucidated in the paragraph and table below.

The commitment by Intelsat to provide Wi-Fi internet access solutions to connect 50 schools in rural and remote areas covers Burundi, Central African Republic, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Zambia and Zimbabwe; the commitment by ZTE to build 400 million USD worth of ICT infrastructure annually by 2025, including in Ethiopia, Ghana and other countries in Africa; the commitment by Qualcomm of to provide wireless technologies to 3 million people in underserved communities in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania by 2025; the commitment by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia to advance digitalization and research and development (R&D) in Sub-Saharan Africa countries; the commitment by the West African Development Bank (BOAD) to finance at least two projects at the value of 180 million USD in the areas of ICT in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo; the commitment by Eutelsat to invest 250 million USD through its new generation KONNECT satellite with the objective of connecting more than 1 million people living in remote, rural, and unserved areas in 35 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; the provision commitment by ICANN of to provide support via the Coalition for Digital Africa ccTLDs Track to strengthen 10 African ccTLD registries in the next two years; the commitment by the Generation Connect Youth Representatives to build strategies and tackle barriers about Digital Transformation in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and other countries in Africa; the commitment by Smart Africa to implement Digital Infrastructure Financing Strategy to broaden the base of contributors in 28 countries in Africa; the commitment by the United Nations Technology Bank to scale up its "Technology Makers Lab" project aiming to enhance digital skills for adolescent boys and girls in Niger, Senegal, Togo and others over the next three years with an estimated budget of 45 million USD; the commitments by Liquid to provide affordable meaningful ultra-high-speed connectivity to communities of hubs through its 'Hubs Connectivity Programme'; to focus on connecting schools in Africa by mapping locations, linking sources of financing to large scale university projects, deploying infrastructure using Liquid's fibre access, wireless broadband, last mile ISPs partners or satellites for the most remote locations; and, to collaborate with Microsoft to deliver internet access to 20 million underserved people in Africa by the end of 2025; the commitments by Child Online Africa to advocate for the rights of children in the digital space, encompassing accessibility, protection, wellbeing in Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and to enhance the digital skills of 5000 children and young people in 15 countries in Africa, the commitments by Intel Corporation to implement its N50 Project and Digital Readiness Programs aiming at bringing access to affordable digital content, applications and services to the unconnected to provide health, social and financial benefits to marginalized communities in Ghana, South Africa, Zambia and other countries.

At the Forum, new Partner2Connect pledges and commitments were also announced. Examples of some of the new commitments made is listed as follows:

SAP committed to invest 3 million USD in innovative education models to enable pathways to employment and entrepreneurship in the digital and green economy for underrepresented, underserved and underprivileged youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa; IPSDI-Burundi committed to advance with digital inclusion within rural areas and as a project to target a pilot school of 250 students (girls only) in the west of Burundi to provide them with basic digital skills and Child Online Protection (COP) Guidelines; Ethiopian Cybersecurity Association committed to advocate for the establishment of national forum for promotion of cybersecurity awareness and culture development; Digital University Chekh Hamidou Kane (UNCHK), Senegal committed to promote innovative pedagogical model and adapted pedagogical tools to improve connectivity in Africa; Uganda Institute of Information and communications Technology (UICT) committed to be at the forefront of creating a sustainable an equitable digital future in Uganda by the implementation the national Digital Transformation Roadmap; NGO Doing Business Together, Guinea committed for the promotion of training, retraining and retention of girls and women in the fields and professions of STEM in Guinea; Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA) committed to develop its National IoT platform and its Children Innovative Learning and Design (CHILD) programme; Ministry of ICT and Innovation, Rwanda committed significant steps toward establishing a circular economy for electrical and electronic equipment (e-waste) management in line with Rwanda's National Circular Economy Action

Plan and Roadmap; Ministry of Digital Transition, Post and Electronic Communications, Burkina Faso committed to the development and extension of fiber optic backbone in Burkina Faso; International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) committed to equip library and information science professionals in African countries with the skills, confidence and networks to use basic digital tools to offer services and be hubs for equitable internet access for all; Ministry of Communications and Digitalization, Ghana committed to bridge the digital divide in Ghana through ICT infrastructure and capacity building and to boost digital competencies through the Digital Transformation Centres (DTC) project; Coalition of youth of Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) committed to catalyze digital transformation and foster inclusive ecosystems of innovation in Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe; African Network Information Centre (AFRINIC) committed to developing African's internet and unlocking the region's full potential in ICT through an array of development programs ; NGO Digital Bridge Institute, Nigeria committed to offer a wide range of training programs and courses in various ICT areas to meet the needs of different segments of the population, including students, professionals and organizations in Nigeria; Agency for Aerial Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar, ASECNA committed to set up innovative projects in line with its desire to work towards a Single African Sky in line with the AU's Agenda 2063.
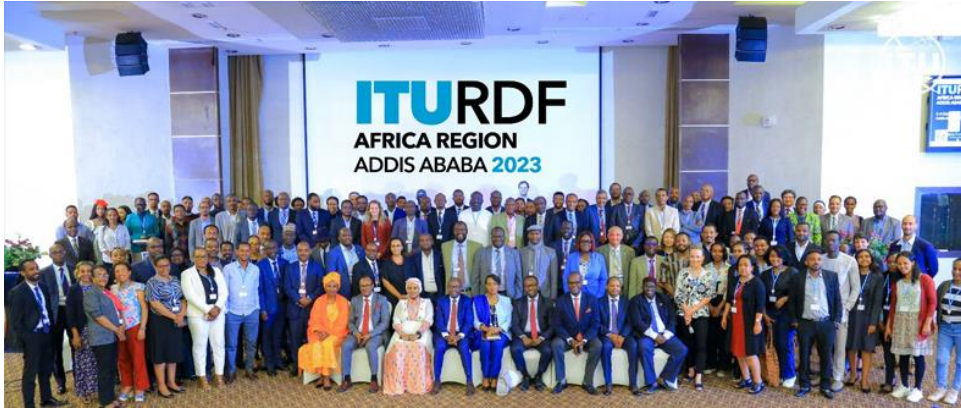
Details and the full Partner2Connect @ RDF-AFR matchmaking table can be found in Annex 4.

## 7. Closing of RDF-AFR 2023

The 2023 edition of RDF-AFR was closed by Dr Zavazava and H.E. Belete Molla, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, wrapping up 2.5 days of rich discussion on how the implementation of the SDGs in Africa can be accelerated through equitable and sustainable digital transformation.

**Annex 1: Group photo and highlights from RDF-AFR 2023**





The RDF-AFR photo library can be accessed here.

The RDF-AFR highlights video can be viewed and downloaded here.

The RDF-AFR communiqué is available here.

**Annex 2: RDF-AFR agenda with speakers**

## 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"

### Agenda

| Day 1: 3 October 2023 | |
|---|---|
| 08:00-09:00 | Arrival and registration |
| 09:00-09:15 | **Official event opening**<br>• Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>• Belete Molla, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia |
| 09:15-10:30 | **High-level Ministerial/Executive session – Setting the scene for 'Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future in Africa'**<br>This will be an interactive high-level ministerial power session on the vision for digital development and digital transformation in Africa with its people at the centre.<br>**Moderator:** Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), International Telecommunication Union (ITU)<br>**Speakers:**<br>• Huria Ali Mahdi, State Minister to National ICT and Digital Economy Sector, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia<br>• Néfertiti Mushiya Tshibanda, Permanent Representative of the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa<br>• John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU)<br>• Lacina Kone, Director General and Chief Executive Officer, Smart Africa Secretariat<br>• Mactar Seck, Chief of Innovation and Technology Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)<br>• Ramiz Alakbarov, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia |
| 10:30-11:00 | Group photo and Coffee/Tea break |
| 11:00-12:00 | **Session 1 – Digital milestones and the urgency for action now**<br>This session will review progress on informing decision making towards achieving the 2022 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22) Kigali Action Plan (KAP) outcomes and its contribution to the realization of Africa's Agenda 2063, the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy and United Nations Development Agenda 2030 and examine the role of digital.<br>**Facilitator and presenter:** Anne-Rachel Inné, Regional Director, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)<br>**Speakers:**<br>• Moses Bayingana, Ag. Head of Information Society Division, African Union Commission (AUC)<br>• John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU) |
| 12:00-13:00 | **Session 2 – Universal and meaningful connectivity for all**<br>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. The importance of infrastructure mapping will be highlighted throughout the discussion.<br>**Moderator:** Balcha Reba, Director General, Ethiopian Communications Authority, Ethiopia<br>**Speakers:** |

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| | • Vaiva Lazauskaite, ITU expert (virtual participation) [*Understanding the phases of digital transformation strategy development*] <br> • Vladimir Daigele, Senior Programme Officer, Future Networks and Spectrum Management Division (FNS), ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) [*Connectivity infrastructure mapping, emerging technologies for meaningful connectivity*] <br> • Laurent Ferrali, Government and International Governmental Organizations (IGO) Engagement Senior Director, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) <br> • Tiffanie Ting Xiong, Director of Integrated Solutions Department in Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, ZTE Corporation <br> • Endashaw Tesfaye, Digital Finance Country Lead, Ethiopia, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) |
| 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** <br> This session aims to review the status of ongoing projects, sharing of experiences and lessons learnt from among the membership and partners. <br> **Moderator**: Didier Nkurikiyimfura, Chief Growth and Strategy Officer, Smart Africa (TBC) <br> **Speakers:** <br> • Alessandra Lustrati, Head of Digital Development, United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Idongesit Udoh, Digital Access Programme Adviser, Nigeria and Charles Juma, Digital Access Program Adviser, Kenya (virtual participation) [*ITU-FCDO global joint programme*] <br> • Lana Žutelija, Adviser to Head of Policy and Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union [*ITU-European Commission projects, Global Gateway*] <br> • Jean-Jacques Massima, Head, ITU Area Office for Central African countries, and Souhila Amazouz, Senior Digital Policy Officer, African Union Commission (AUC) (AUC), speaking to the Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa [*ITU-with African Union-European Commission joint project*] <br> • Mohammed Suleh-Yusuf, Expert, Legal and Regulatory Services, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Nigeria [*Nigeria collaborative regulation case study, ITU Collaborative Digital Regulation Country Reviews project with several partners*] <br> • Josephine Nyiranzeyimana, Government Chief Information Officer, Rwanda Information Society Authority, Rwanda (virtual participation) [*Giga Rwanda implementation, ITU-UNICEF Giga initiative for connectivity of schools*] |
| 15:45-16:00 | Coffee/Tea break |
| 16:00-17:00 | **Session 4 – Accelerating digital transformation for sustainable development** <br> 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. It 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. <br> **Moderator**: Mactar Seck, Chief of Innovation and Technology Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) <br> **Speakers**: <br> • Rita Bissoonauth, Director of Liaison Office to the African Union and UNECA and Representative to Ethiopia, UNESCO <br> • Fargani Tambeayuk, Head of Connectivity and Innovation Policy, Meta Africa <br> • Choolwe Nalubamba, Director General, ZICTA, Zambia |

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| | • Francis Cubahiro, Director of Infrastructure and ICTs, Ministry of Communication, ICT and Medias, Burundi<br>• Julia Niblett, Australia's Ambassador to Ethiopia<br>• Betselot Zewge, Creative Director, Zemenay, and Entrepreneur participating in the ITU-EIF Project |
| 17:00-17:15 | **Wrap up of Day 1**<br>**[Wrap up by youth representatives: Sandra PHIRI and Lydia Berhanu]** |
| <td colspan="2" align="center">**Day 2: 4 October 2023**</td> |
| 08:00-09:00 | Arrival |
| 09:00-09:30 | **Opening of Day 2 Partner2Connect Matchmaking Roundtables** |
| 09:30-10:45 | **Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable 1 – Transforming pledges into commitments for impact**<br>This session will focus on effective mechanisms for transforming commitments into the scaled-up impact of digital for sustainable development in Africa and beyond.<br>Announcements and commitments and target countries in the Africa region will be made.<br>**Moderator**: Sameer Sharma, Head, Special Initiatives, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>**Panellists**:<br>• Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, Minister for Communications and Digitalization for the Republic of Ghana (virtual participation)<br>• Masahiro Miyashita, Chief Strategy Officer, Safaricom<br>• Maureen Mwanza, Board Member, Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA), Zambia<br>• Lare Atcha-Oubou, Senior Advisor, Market Development and Government Affairs Africa, INTELSAT<br>• Qing Zeng, ZTE Corporation<br>• Fargani Tambeayuk, Meta, Head of Connectivity and Innovation Policy, Africa<br>• Sunil Geness, Director Global Government Affairs and CSR, Global Sustainability Lead Africa, SAP Africa |
| 10:45-11:15 | Coffee/Tea break |
| 11:15-12:30 | **Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable 2 – Digital transformation for an enabled digital economy and society**<br>This session will discuss how innovation can accelerate digital transformation in Africa.<br>**AFR Regional Initiative 1:** Supporting digital transformation to usher in a rapid transition to a digital economy while accelerating innovation in Africa<br>**Moderator**: Lwando Bbuku, Manager Markets and Competition, Zambia Information & Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA), Zambia<br>**Speakers**:<br>• Elizabeth Migwalla, Vice President International Government Affairs, Qualcomm (virtual participation)<br>• Thapeli Tjabane, Director General ICT, Ministry of Information, Communications Science, Technology and Innovation, Lesotho (virtual participation)<br>• Joshua Kweikuma, Youth Engagement Associate, Women and Gender Development Directorate, African Union Commission<br>• Ismael Limalia, Manager, Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA), Mauritius (virtual participation)<br>• Abiyot Bayou, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch break |

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| 13:30-14:45 | **Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable 3 – Resilient infrastructure and emerging technologies**<br>This session will discuss emerging technologies and their ability to contribute to resilient infrastructure deployment.<br>**AFR Regional Initiative 2:** Implementation and expansion of broadband infrastructure, connectivity and emerging technologies<br>**Moderators**: Lidya Birhanu, Generation Connect Youth Envoy – Ethiopia and Ali Drissa Badiel, Area Representative for West Africa<br>**Speakers**:<br>• Ahmed D. Kora, Professor, Ecole Superieure Multinationale des Telecommunications (ESMT), Senegal (virtual participation)<br>• Alain T. Sawadogo, Senior Digital Development Expert, World Bank Senegal<br>• Koffi Fabrice Djossou Senior Digital Economy Expert, West African Development Bank (BOAD), Lomé, Togo (virtual participation)<br>• Thomas A. Senaji, ICT Consultant and Senior Expert, Professor and Deputy Vice Chancellor, The East African University, Kenya<br>• Modou Mamoune Ngom, Manager, Universal Service fund (FDSUT), Ministry of Digital Economy, Senegal (virtual participation)<br>• Lionel Traoré, Senior Legal Officer, Ministry of Digital Economy, Burkina Faso (virtual participation)<br>• Astrid Bonté, Director for Institutional and International Affairs, Eutelsat (virtual participation) |
| 14:45-15:45 | **Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtable 4 – Universal, trustworthy, and equitable access and use**<br>This session will discuss the need to continue building confidence in the use of digital technologies.<br>**AFR Regional Initiative 3:** Building trust, safety and security in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies and protection of personal data<br>**Moderator**: Yaovi Atohoun, Director for Staff Stakeholder Engagement and Operations Africa, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)<br>**Speakers**:<br>• Abdul-Hakeem-Ajijola, Chair, African Union Cybersecurity Experts Group (AUCSEG) (virtual participation)<br>• Ghislaine Kayigi, Chief CyberSecurity Standards Officer, National Cyber Security Authority, Rwanda (virtual participation)<br>• Aretha Mare, Data, Security Infrastructure and Governance Unit Manager, Smart Africa Secretariat (virtual participation)<br>• Awo Aidam Amenyah, Executive Director, Child Online Africa (virtual participation)<br>• Berhanu Beyene, President, Ethiopian Cybersecurity Association, Ethiopia<br>• Christopher Banda, Head of Malawi CERT, Malawi (vitual participation)<br>• Solomon Soka, Director General, Information Network Security Administration (INSA), Ethiopia |
| 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**<br>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.<br>**AFR Regional Initiative 4:** Fostering emerging technologies and innovation ecosystems<br>**Moderator**: Mohammed Ba, Senior Coordinator, Digital innovation Ecosystem, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>**Speakers**:<br>• Marietou Ba, Coordinateur Laboratoire d'Innovation, Senegal Numerique, (virtual participation)<br>• Helinna Ayalew, Head of Innovation Partnerships, Liquid Intelligent Technologies |

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| | • Selamyhun Adefers, Director General for Research and Innovation, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia<br>• Ian Nyasha Mutamiri, Head Innovations, POTRAZ, Zimbabwe (virtual participation)<br>• Bienvenu Agbokponto Soglo, Director, Government Affairs Africa and IGA CTO Liaison, Intel Corporation (virtual participation)<br>• Ounfanatt Edui, Programme Officer, UN Technology Bank (virtual participation) |
| 17:00-17:15 | **Wrap up of Day 2**<br>[Wrap up by youth representatives: Krshtee Sukhbilas and Horace Chipembere] |
| 18:00-21:00 | **Networking and social event** |
| **Day 3: 5 October 2023** | |
| 08:00-09:00 | Arrival |
| 09:00-09:15 | **Opening of Day 3 and interactive recap of Days 1 and 2 by youth representatives** |
| 09:15-10:30 | **Session 6 – Youth-driven digital development in Africa**<br>This session is powered by youth who will be sharing their digital development action plan.<br>**Moderator**: Saba Beyene, Generation Connect Youth Envoy – Africa<br>**Opening remarks:** Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>**Speakers**:<br>*Youth*<br>• Bethlehem Wondimu Abo, Founder and Creative Director at Be8ty, Youth entrepreneur EIF-ITU project<br>• Horace Chipembere, Managing Director of Her for Tech in Malawi, Winner of the Generation Connect Youth Summit Hackathon<br>• Krshtee Sukhbilas, Mauritius, Winner of the GC Youth Summit Hackathon<br>• Emmanuella ABLÉ, Côte d'Ivoire, Generation Connect – Youth Envoy<br>*Professionals/Experts*<br>• Anne Chantal Mvogo, Chef de Division de la Coopération et de la Recherche, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Postes, des Télécommunications et des TIC (SUP'PTIC), Cameroun and Réseau International Des Femmes Expertes Du Numérique (RIFEN)(virtual participation)<br>• Regina Mungai, Réseau International Des Femmes Expertes Du Numérique (RIFEN), Kenya (virtual participation)<br>*Policymakers*<br>• John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU)<br>• Amah Vinyo Capo, Directeur de l'Economie, des Marchés et de la Concurrence (DEMC), Autorité de Régulation des Communications Electroniques et des Postes (ARCEP), Togo and ITU-D Study Group 1 Vice-Chair |
| 10:30-11:00 | Coffee/Tea break |
| 11:00-12:00 | **Session 7 – Flagship initiative deep-dives**<br>**\*** The first deep-dive will show case and share progress of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development to bring an equitable digital future in Africa.<br>• Mohammed Ba, Senior Coordinator, Digital Innovation Ecosystem, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>**\*** The second deep-dive discuss what the GovStack initiative and its role in establishing Government Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Technology Stack (GovStack) based on open, reusable, trusted and interoperable building blocks and how this can support the implementation of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to digital transformation. |

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| | • Hani Eskandar, Head of Digital Services Division, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) (virtual participation)<br><br>**\*** The third deep-dive with look at ITU infrastructure connectivity maps, infrastructure data, mapping tools and insights for informed decision making.<br><br>• Vladimir Daigele, Senior Programme Officer, Future Networks and Spectrum Management Division (FNS), ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) |
| 12:00-12:30 | **Session 8 – Regional Development Forum takeaways and next steps**<br>This session will present the Regional Development Forum takeaways and discuss next steps. |
| 12:30-13:00 | **Closing of event**<br>• Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)<br>• Belete Molla, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch break |

## Annex 3: List of contributions

| Title of contribution | Source of contribution | Focus area |
|---|---|---|
| Bridging the digital divide through ICT infrastructure and capacity building | Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications, Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation, Ghana | Infrastructure/capacity development |
| Bridging the digital divide from the Bottom of the Pyramid: GIFEC's Digital Transformation Centres Project (DTC) | Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications, Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation, Ghana | Capacity development |
| Rwanda's digital transformation journey | Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Innovation, Rwanda | Digital transformation |
| Rwanda e-Waste and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) | Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Innovation, Rwanda | e-waste |
| Gestion des DEEE au Burundi, enjeux et opportunités | Agence de Regulation et de Controle des Telecommunications, Burundi | e-waste |
| Children innovative learning and design programme | Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA), Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, Mauritius | Capacity development |
| National IoT platform | Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA), Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, Mauritius | Infrastructure |
| ITU and FCDO continue partnership to support meaningful connectivity in underserved communities | United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and ITU/BDT | Policy and regulation/Capacity development |
| Digitalization of research and development in Sub-Saharan Africa | National Research Development, Ministry of Innovation and Technology | Research & Development/Innovation |
| Enabling meaningful access through complementary access networks | The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) | Infrastructure/Capacity development |
| GSMA actions on expanding digital inclusion in Africa | GSMA | Digital inclusion |
| Coalition for Digital Africa | Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Number (ICANN) | Infrastructure |
| AFRINIC internet development programs | AFRINIC | Infrastructure/Capacity development |

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| Enhance digital capacity and skills development across the member states | AFRALTI, Kenya | Capacity development |
| Cybersecurity awareness and culture development in Ethiopia: Role of non-Governmental actors | Ethiopian Cybersecurity Association, Ethiopia | Cybersecurity |
| Electricity and the internet: Two markets, one big opportunity | NetPoints Limited, Nigeria | Infrastructure |
| MIXITECH project | NGO Doing Business Together, Guinea | Digital inclusion |
| Université numérique, UN modèle pédagogique innovant et des outils pédagogiques adaptés à la connectivité en Afrique | Université numérique Cheikh Hamidou Kane (UNCHK), Sénégal | Capacity development |
| Initiatives de l'ASECNA en matiere de transformation digitale pour la navigation aerienne en Afrique/ ASECNA's digital transformation initiatives for air navigation in Africa | Agency for Air Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar (ASECNA) | Digital transformation |
| Libraries: Hubs for equitable internet access for all | International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) | Digital inclusion |
| Capacity development in telecommunication infrastructure and emerging technologies | Digital Bridges Institute, Nigeria | Capacity development |
| Digital inclusion within rural areas in Burundi | IPSDI Burundi, Burundi | Digital inclusion |
| UICT contributions to a sustainable and equitable digital future In Uganda | Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology - Uganda | Capacity development |
| Accelerera youth: Digital transformation and inclusion in Africa | Coligação da Juventude dos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa – CJP (Coalition of Youth of Portuguese-speaking African Countries) | Digital inclusion/Youth engagement |
| Digital transformation in Africa: Strategies, barriers, and youth empowerment | Generation Connect Africa | Digital inclusion/Youth engagement |
| Enhancing cybersecurity in digital financial services in Africa | Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, International Telecommunication Union | Cybersecurity |
| Technology makers lab implementation in LDCs | United Nations Technology Bank | Innovation |

## Annex 4: Partner2Connect @ RDF-AFR matchmaking report

The Partner2Connect @ RDF-AFR matchmaking table below contains the examples of the pledges/commitments against the ITU Regional Initiatives for Africa.

| No | Regional Initiatives | Name of the Pledge /Commitment | Submitting Organization | Value of Total Pledge / Commitment in USD (US dollars) | Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/ Commitment in Africa |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | AFR2.4 | Intelsat committed to utilize its Wi-Fi internet access solutions to connect 50 schools in rural and remote areas by 2025. | Intelsat | 1,000,000 | • Burundi<br>• Central African Republic<br>• Mali<br>• Malawi<br>• Niger<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 2 | AFR2.3 | ZTE committed to bridge the digital divide by pledging to build $400 million worth of ICT infrastructure annually by 2025 | ZTE Corporation | 1,400,000,000 | • Ghana<br>• Ethiopia<br>• Other relevant countries in Africa |
| 3 | AFR1.9 | SAP committed to invest 3 million USD in innovative education models to enable pathways to employment and entrepreneurship in the digital and green economy for underrepresented, underserved, and underprivileged youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in Africa | SAP | 3,000,000 | • Kenya<br>• Nigeria<br>• South Africa |
| 4 | AFR2.4 | Qualcomm committed to bring wireless technologies to 3 million people in underserved communities around the world by 2025 | Qualcomm | N/A | • Kenya<br>• Nigeria<br>• South Africa<br>• Senegal<br>• Tanzania |
| 5 | AFR1.3 | The Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Ethiopia committed to contribute toward the Digitalization of Research and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa | Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia | N/A | • Botswana<br>• Burkina Faso<br>• Cote d'Ivoire<br>• Ethiopia<br>• Ghana<br>• Kenya<br>• Malawi<br>• Mozambique<br>• Namibia<br>• Nigeria<br>• Rwanda<br>• Senegal<br>• Sierra Leone<br>• Tanzania<br>• Uganda<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 6 | AFR4.4 | BOAD committed to contributing to the financing of two projects | Banque Ouest | 120,000,000 | • Benin<br>• Burkina Faso |

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| | | in the field of ICT and digitalisation in order to achieve the objectives of the DJIOLIBA strategic plan up to 2025. | Africaine de Développent (BOAD) | | • Cote d'Ivoire<br>• Guinea-Bissau<br>• Mali<br>• Niger<br>• Sénégal<br>• Togo |
| 7 | AFR2.3 | Eutelsat committed to invest 250 million USD through its new generation KONNECT satellite with the objective of connecting more than 1 million people living in remote, rural and unserved areas of Sub-Saharan Africa | Eutelsat | 250,000,000 | • Angola<br>• Benin<br>• Botswana<br>• Burkina Faso<br>• Burundi<br>• Central African Republic<br>• Congo<br>• Cote d'Ivoire<br>• DRC<br>• Djibouti<br>• Equatorial Guinea<br>• Eritrea<br>• Eswatini<br>• Ethiopia<br>• Gabon<br>• Gambia<br>• Ghana<br>• Guinea<br>• Guinea-Bissau<br>• Kenya<br>• Lesotho<br>• Liberia<br>• Madagascar<br>• Malawi<br>• Mozambique<br>• Namibia<br>• Rwanda<br>• Senegal<br>• Somalia<br>• South Africa<br>• Tanzania<br>• Togo<br>• Uganda<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 8 | AFR1.1 | GC Youth Representatives committed to work for Digital Transformation in Africa: Strategies, Barriers, and Youth Empowerment | Generation Connect Youth Representatives | N/A | • Burkina Faso<br>• Cote D'Ivoire<br>• Other countries in Africa, where relevant |
| 9 | AFR2.10 | ICANN committed to provide support via Coalition for Digital Africa ccTLDs Track to strengthen 10 African ccTLD registries in the next two years | ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) | N/A | • Angola<br>• Benin<br>• Botswana<br>• Burkina Faso<br>• Burundi<br>• Comoros<br>• Congo<br>• Egypt |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | • Eswatini<br>• Gambia<br>• Ghana<br>• Kenya<br>• Madagascar<br>• Malawi<br>• Mozambique<br>• Namibia<br>• Niger<br>• Nigeria<br>• South Africa<br>• Togo<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 10 | AFR1.6 | Smart Africa committed to Implement Digital Infrastructure Financing Strategy to broaden the base of contributors | Smart Africa | N/A | • Algeria<br>• Angola<br>• Burkina Faso<br>• Cabo Verde<br>• Cameroon<br>• Chad<br>• Congo<br>• Cote d'Ivoire<br>• DRC<br>• Djibouti<br>• Egypt<br>• Gabon<br>• Ghana<br>• Guinea<br>• Kenya<br>• Mali<br>• Niger<br>• Rwanda<br>• Sao Tome and Principe<br>• Senegal<br>• Sierra Leone<br>• South Africa<br>• South Sudan<br>• Sudan<br>• Togo Tunisia<br>• Uganda<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 11 | AFR1.9 | UN Technology bank committed to Scale up 'Technology Makers Lab' project aiming to enhance digital skills for adolescent boys and girls in 9 LDCs over the next three years with an estimated budget of 45 million USD | UN Technology Bank | 45,000,000 | • Niger<br>• Senegal<br>• Togo<br>• Other selected LDCs |
| 12 | AFR1.6 | Liquid committed to provide affordable meaningful ultra-high-speed connectivity to communities of hubs through its 'Hubs Connectivity Programme' | Liquid Intelligent Technologies Group | N/A | • Botswana<br>• Burundi<br>• Congo<br>• Core d'Ivoire<br>• DRC |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | • Ethiopia<br>• Kenya<br>• Lesotho<br>• Malawi<br>• Nigeria<br>• Rwanda<br>• Seychelles<br>• South Africa<br>• South Sudan<br>• Uganda<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 13 | AFR2.4 | Liquid committed to focus on connecting schools in Africa by mapping locations; linking sources of financing to large scale university projects; deploying infrastructure using Liquid's fibre access, wireless broadband, last mile ISPs partners or satellites for the most remote locations | Liquid Intelligent Technologies Group | N/A | • All relevant countries in the region |
| 14 | AFR2.4 | Liquid and Microsoft committed to collaborate to deliver internet access to 20 million underserved people in Africa by the end of 2025 | Liquid Intelligent Technologies Group | N/A | • DRC<br>• Kenya<br>• Malawi<br>• Nigeria<br>• South Africa<br>• Tanzania<br>• Zambia |
| 15 | AFR3.4 | Child Online Africa committed advocate for the rights of children in the digital space, encompassing accessibility, protection, wellbeing in Africa | Child Online Africa | N/A | • Ghana<br>• Mali<br>• Niger<br>• Sierra Leone<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |
| 16 | AFR1.7 | Child Online Africa committed to enhance the digital skills of 5000 children and young people in Africa | Child Online Africa | N/A | • Burkina Faso<br>• Chad<br>• Ethiopia<br>• Ghana<br>• Kenya<br>• Mali<br>• Mozambique<br>• Niger<br>• Senegal<br>• South Africa<br>• South Sudan<br>• Tanzania<br>• Uganda<br>• Zambia<br>• Zimbabwe |

**Annex 5: ITU Regional Initiatives for Africa**

**AFR1: SUPPORTING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO USHER IN A RAPID TRANSITION TO A DIGITAL ECONOMY WHILE ACCELERATING INNOVATION IN AFRICA**

**Objective:**

To assist Member States in the Africa region in reaping the full benefits of digital transformation by addressing the existing policy and regulatory challenges and formulating strategies to encourage the development and use of digital technologies in various sectors of the economy and foster innovation.

Taking into consideration the enormous potential of digital technologies to contribute to accelerating countries' socio-economic development, and the Union's vital role to assist in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ITU is called upon to support Member States in the Africa region in building, developing and sustaining digitally based economies.

**Expected results:**

1. Assistance in developing national digital transformation strategies focusing on enabling policies and regulations to enhance the use of digital technologies in the economy.
2. Assistance in developing action plans with digital key performance indicators encompassing the adoption of e-applications geared to sustainable development in various aspects of African economies and e-government services.
3. Assistance in conducting research on the current state of digitalization of industries in Africa, trends and needs, at the regional level.
4. Building partnerships within the ITU membership to encourage the exchange of best practices and knowledge-sharing in the implementation of digital transformation projects.
5. Assistance in adopting and implementing relevant standards that are targeted at addressing challenges of interoperability stemming from the disruptive and transformative spread of digital innovation.
6. Help in designing models and facilitating the financing of digital transformation of economies in Africa, and identification of partnership opportunities to establish sustainable innovation frameworks.
7. Support in designing and implementing a comprehensive and inclusive long-term plan for human and institutional capacity building, as a fundamental pillar to transform the economy into a digitally oriented economy and to guarantee its effective functioning, that takes into consideration upskilling and reskilling of citizens on aspects related to emerging technologies.
8. Support in establishing centres of excellence and incubators to help nurture and develop innovative ideas and start-ups in Africa.
9. Development of Member States' capability to promote accessibility in order to improve the development of specialized skills to meet the ICT needs of persons with disabilities and thus enhance their use of digital applications.

**AFR2: IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION OF BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURES, CONNECTIVITY AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES**

**Objective:**

To promote the deployment of broadband infrastructures in order to help Member States in Africa ensure that no one is left behind and leverage the full benefits of high-speed and high-quality connectivity and the impact of emerging technologies

**Expected results:**

1. Assistance in developing national and regional strategic plans, focusing on enabling policies and regulations addressing high-speed, high-quality broadband networks in the region.
2. Provision of support and sharing of best practices on national broadband strategies and strengthening capacity development; implementing and monitoring national broadband plans to use universal service

funds effectively; and developing sustainable financial and operational business models, in order to provide affordable broadband access to unserved and underserved areas.

3. Development programmes for expanding connectivity to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and businesses in order to support jobs, business growth and economic development.

4. Development programmes for expanding connectivity to education- and health-related entities, SMEs and businesses and homes and communities in order to enable access to relevant digital content.

5. Provision of support that will enable the sharing of best practices on financing models as well as the identification of partnership opportunities to enhance high-speed, high-quality broadband.

6. Assistance in promoting the harmonization of subregional broadband plans so as to ensure equitable access to high-speed, high-quality broadband for all.

7. Assistance with human capacity development resources, through training programmes, workshops and suchlike, to exchange expertise and to provide persons with disabilities with the platform to participate in and benefit from the emergence of new broadband technologies.

8. Assistance in extending the regional and continental backbone initiatives to ensure the resilience of submarine cables.

9. Improved awareness of policy and regulatory frameworks relating to spectrum-management issues in line with ITU decisions, including radio-frequency planning, trading, refarming and sharing, along with spectrum-licensing frameworks for competition, obligations and pricing.

10. Development, implementation and review of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, including for network infrastructure protection, construction codes, regulations and technical standards for fibre-to-the-home infrastructure, collaborative construction in civil works, next-generation universal service obligation, infrastructure sharing, and facilitation of right-of-way and site acquisition.

11. Undertaking the necessary feasibility studies and establishing roadmaps at the national and regional levels for the deployment of emerging technologies with high-speed connectivity, such as 5G-related technologies, as well as capacity building and ecosystem development to support 5G use.

12. Designing and execution of awareness-raising and measurement campaigns on exposure to electromagnetic fields and safety, as well as on the benefits of wireless technologies, backed up by science and medical recommendations.

**AFR3: BUILDING TRUST, SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE USE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS/INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA**

**Objective:**

To assist Member States in developing and implementing policies, strategies, standards and mechanisms, as well as human capacity building, to enhance the secu- rity of information systems and networks, ensure the protection of data and people, including vulnerable groups such as children, and guarantee digital trust; to protect information and communication technology (ICT) and its applications.

**Expected results:**

1. Assistance to Member States in improving their cybersecurity readiness status with respect to the pillars of the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index and the goals of the Connect 2030 Agenda.

2. Support for Member States in assessing, adopting, developing and implementing a regulatory and legislative framework, at the national and regional levels, related to cybersecurity.

3. Development of a global framework for collaboration and awareness at the regional and subregional levels for nurturing a global culture of cybersecurity and to help consumers better understand and protect against risks.

4. Assistance in developing content for educating consumers on their rights and responsibilities related to data protection when performing electronic and physical transactions, as well as in the execution of campaigns to raise awareness of cyberthreats, cybersecurity measures and quality of service in the use of ICTs.

5. Encouraging the sharing of best practices and exchange of knowledge among Member States on the mechanisms to combat cybercrime and cyberthreats.

6. Support for Member States in establishing and developing national computer incident response teams, and strengthening cooperation mechanisms among them, at the regional and subregional levels.

**AFR4: FOSTERING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS**

**Objective:**

To foster an enabling digital innovation ecosystem that can navigate technological revolutions and the establishment of a sustainable environment conducive to the utilization of emerging technologies and the development of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and start-ups.

**Expected results:**

1. Assistance in undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the human and institutional capacity and regulatory environment related to digital innovation, emerging technologies and SMMEs, at the national and regional levels.
2. Support for Member States in developing the necessary legislative and regulatory framework to encourage digital industries and innovation development and the establishment of SMMEs.
3. Assistance in designing and adopting national strategies and infrastructures, such as innovation and research labs, to usher in the utilization of emerging technologies in the different sectors of the economy.
4. Support in scaling up digital entrepreneurship and SMMEs through global partnerships focused on achieving national development priorities and in elaborating financing models to ensure the necessary investments for the continuous development and deployment of emerging technologies.
5. Design of a comprehensive human capacity building framework to upskill and reskill human resources using material related to emerging technologies and digital innovation.
6. Awareness-raising on the importance of protecting intellectual property and developing relevant regulatory frameworks.

## Annex 6: List of references and links

- **RDF-AFR main website** (automatic translation into the 6 UN languages is available)

  **Website shortcut:** itu.int/go/RDF-AFR-23
  - Agenda with speakers
  - Contributions received
  - Presentations and reference material
  - Webcast archive (TIES login needed)

- **Partner2Connect Digital Coalition**
  - About Partner2Connect Digital Coalition
  - Submit a Partner2Connect pledge
  - Partner2Connect pledge dashboard