

Salutations

1. Ministry of ICT and Courier Services (Hon. Deputy Minister Hon. S. Muswere)
2. Ministry of ICT and Courier Services (PS. Eng. Dr. S. Kundishora)
3. Ministry of ICT and Courier Services (PD. Mr. S. C. Chigwamba)
4. Ministry of ICT and Courier Services - Staff
5. POTRAZ Representatives
6. Telecommunications and ICTs Operators Representatives
7. Stakeholders in the Industry
8. Representatives
9. Distinguished participants
10. Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

On behalf of the ITU and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of ICT for hosting this workshop. I would also like to express our gratitude to all stakeholders who have worked tirelessly in the preparations and organization of this workshop, not forgetting continuous generosity of the Host afforded to us during the workshop period.

Guest of honour/Honourable Deputy Minister

It has to be recalled that WTDC- 2017 Buenos Aries Declaration recognized that timely access to modern, secure, affordable and accessible telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, applications and services to offer opportunities for boosting productivity and efficiency to end poverty, to improve peoples' lives and to ensure that sustainable development becomes a reality in LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs including countries with economies in transition, and across the world;

In addition to the recognition above, ITU is committed to improving people's lives and making the world a better place through the use of telecommunications/ICTs;

WTDC-17 therefore declared among others that;

1. The use of various telecommunication/ICT systems is essential to ensuring connectivity for all the world's underserved and unserved populations, to meet the needs of governments and citizens in a timely manner;
2. Policy-makers and regulators should continue to promote widespread, affordable access to telecommunications/ICTs, including Internet access, through fair, transparent, stable, predictable, non-discriminatory enabling policies, legal and regulatory environments, including common approaches to conformance and interoperability, while at the same time providing investment incentives at national, regional and international levels;
3. Digital literacy and ICT skills, as well as human and institutional capacity in the development, uptake and use of telecommunication/ICT networks, applications and services should be enhanced to ensure inclusive, egalitarian and quality education that would enable all people,

in particular women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, to contribute to knowledge and human development

4. An inclusive information society should take into account the needs of women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, and the needs of children in the use of telecommunications/ICTs;
5. Opportunities provided by telecommunications/ICTs should be fully exploited with the aim of ensuring equitable access to telecommunications/ICTs and to innovations that foster sustainable socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, job creation, gender equality, child online protection, entrepreneurship and the promotion of digital inclusion and empowerment for all;
6. Building an inclusive, development-oriented information society will require an unremitting multistakeholder effort;

Guest of Honour/Honourable Deputy Minister, Distinguished participants

One of the ITU Development Sector's Objectives in its Strategic Plan of the four year cycle is **Inclusive digital society** which aims at fostering the development and use of telecommunications/ICTs and applications to empower people and societies for sustainable development

whose related outcomes are

- a) Improved capacity of the ITU membership to accelerate economic and social development by leveraging and using new technologies and telecommunication/ICT services and applications.
- b) Strengthened capacity of the ITU membership to develop strategies, policies and practices for digital inclusion, in particular for the empowerment of women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs.

And related outputs among others,

Products and services on digital inclusion for girls and women and people with specific needs (elderly, youth, children and indigenous people, among others), such as awareness-raising on digital inclusion strategies, policies and practices, development of digital skills, toolkits and guidelines and forums of discussion to share practices and strategies.

Guest of Honour/Honourable Deputy Minister, Distinguished participants,

Surely ITU has a lot to do with Digital inclusion and this workshop is to support implementation of ITU's plans. I would also like to take this opportunity and inform participants of this workshop that

ITU has developed a series of capacity building programmes related to our mandate over the past year. This includes a national web accessibility programme that aims at building political buy in for accessible websites and web content, train web and content developers as well as empower ITU academic members with knowledge and related curriculum to continue building capacity in ICT accessibility in-country and further develop a pool of accessible web and content developer experts. Promoting web accessibility was identified by ITU-D Study Group members as their number 1 priority moving forward. This programme requires advanced planning and national funding, and could be scheduled for next year, either as a stand-alone programme for Zimbabwe or for several Southern

African countries. ITU would be pleased to discuss with interested stakeholders possibilities to bring this programme to the Africa region.

In addition, we have launched several key resources to support ICT accessibility implementation:

- 3 online self-paced courses in ICT accessibility, which provide an overall understanding and knowledge of this topic;
- A complete set of 5 video tutorials that provide appropriate information and knowledge on how to develop PDFs, Word, Power Point and Excel documents in accessible formats (some of these video's items will be also shared during our workshop). This could be a good place to get started for our participants in this workshop.

I wish to inform the workshop that, while ITU is promoting mainly accessible ICT, assistive technologies will be also discussed to provide suggestions to the workshop of other stakeholders who may be able to offer such training which includes UNESCO.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished participants

Finally, I would like to invite distinguished participants to actively participate in person or remotely on the work of ITU Development Sector's Study Group 1 question 7, which offers a global platform to share experiences and best practices in Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs.

ITU wishes to reiterate its commitment to work with all stakeholders to support their efforts in implementing accessible and affordable ICT and thus, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as the industry evolves.

I wish this workshop a great success.

I thank you for your kind attention.