Opening speech by Andrew RUGEGE ITU Regional Director for Africa

PRIDA Project Kick-Off, Technical Committee meetings and Workshop on Cross-border Spectrum Coordination, GABORONE, Botswana, 29 -31 May 2019

H.E. Ambassador Jan SADEK,- Head of the European Union Delegation to Botswana and Representative to SADC

Mr. Martin Mokgware - CEO, Botswana Communication Regulatory Authority **(BOCRA)**

Ms. Souhila Assouz - AUC Representative

Mr. Kezias MWALE -ATU Representative

Representatives of RECs and ICT Regulatory Associations

Members of the ITU Technical Committee and ITU Focal Points for PRIDA

Distinguished Delegates

-Ladies and Gentlemen Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of the ITU and my own behalf, I wish to welcome you to Gaborone and thank you all for having made the time to be here. I also wish to convey my grateful thanks to Mr. Mokgware and through him to BOCRA and the Government of Botswana for hosting the event of the Kick-off meeting of the PRIDA project and its associated activities.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

2. We are all here today from far and near because we believe that ICTs underpin modern society, offering widely recognized economic growth and social benefits as well as regional integration.

3. We are all here because we firmly believe that mass broadband connectivity can improve our lives in a myriad of ways, for example for doing business, providing better access to health services, enabling financial inclusion through m-payments, empowering people through online education, giving easier access to

cultural content and creating transparency in government.

4. In addition, ICT infrastructure as well as electronic communications and services are a key enabler of national competitiveness through greater efficiency.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Today, we stand on the verge of fulfilling the potential of high-speed ICT networks in many parts of the globe; however in others, such as Africa, further efforts must be mobilized to leverage the promise of ICTs and allow for greater efficiency of national economies.

6. Countries in Africa are faced with the challenge of forging appropriate policies and strategies to make ICTs available, affordable and accessible as a vital development enabler for building inclusive, resilient and sustainable modern-day knowledge societies.

7. As for the other continents, the demand for broadband connectivity – and by extension, the demand for spectrum and rolling out of high-speed broadband networks for electronic communications, is a growing fact of life.

8. However, availability and affordability of broadband access are still challenges in many African countries.

9. The low level of broadband penetration remains as an inhibitor for deployment of internet based services, which have the potential to unlock social and economic development and foster efficient public services.

10. In this context, all African countries must take measures to address the important issues of radio frequency spectrum, its timely assignment, harmonization of its use and its availability to promote the adoption and deployment of mobile broadband.

11. The importance of shaping fair, transparent, stable, predictable and non-discriminatory legal and regulatory environment that promotes competition and attracts investments cannot be overstated. While in the recent years, many African countries have progressed towards greater competition, more work needs to be done to foster the roll-out of broadband networks and make it affordable and accessible.

12. Sound policy and regulatory frameworks for broadband at national level, and harmonization at regional and Pan African levels play a crucial role in view of laying the foundation across the continent for a truly integrated market for ICT services enabling investments, innovation and growth in the ICT sectors and across economies.

13. It is for this reason that the European Union, the African Union and the International Telecommunication Union

resolved to collaborate on the "Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA)", a joint initiative which aims at enabling the African continent to reap the benefits of digitalization, by addressing various dimensions of broadband demand and supply in Africa building the capacities of African stakeholders in the Internet Governance space.

14. We are here today to celebrate, launch and discuss the ITU part and contribution which is to promote harmonized spectrum utilization and regulations in the framework PRIDA.

15. In the project, ITU will strive for a stable and predictable framework to ensure that radio spectrum is made available based on administrative procedures that are (i) open, (ii) transparent and (iii) non-discriminatory.

16. Harmonization efforts at Pan-African level of the four (4) core functions (spectrum licensing, spectrum pricing,

spectrum refarming and cross border frequency coordination) will create the conditions for economies of scale and thus a rapid deployment of wireless broadband, filling an important gap and complementing the ongoing infrastructure-focused efforts towards increased ICT use across the continent

17. ITU will seek to accelerate migration from Analog to Digital terrestrial TV broadcasting so that Africa may also reap the fruits of the digital dividend, defined as the amount of spectrum made available by the migration.

18. The coverage in these frequency bands is far greater than the ones above 1 GHz, thus requiring lower investments for network deployment than in higher frequency bands. This makes the provision of mobile services economically viable also in villages, suburban and rural areas.

20. It is my hope that after PRIDA, Africa will see:

• improved Spectrum allocation based on international best practices: Harmonizing spectrum utilization in Africa

• Improved Terms and conditions for spectrum licensing as well as spectrum pricing predictability: with a technology neutral philosophy and transparency.

• strengthened Cooperation related to the treatment of harmful interference via cross-border frequency coordination agreements: Harmonised Calculation Method for Africa (HCM4A
• Trained workforce of national regulatory and/or frequencies agencies.
These attributes will contribute to the Spectrum strategies to meet the needs of today - delivering sustainable, wide-reaching and reliable connectivity for all.

With gratitude to the European Union for the financial support and the African Union for their political mandate, it is now my privilege to launch the ITU implementation

of the Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa, PRIDA.

Thank you.