

**4th ATU Preparatory Meeting for WRC-19 (APM19-4)**  
East London, South Africa

**30 August 2019**

***Closing Remarks***

**Mario Maniewicz**  
**Director, Radiocommunication Bureau**

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Excelency, Ms Stella Ndabemi-Abrahams, Minister of Communications & Digital Technologies

Honorable Oscar Mabuyane, Premier of the Eastern Cape

John Omo, ATU Secretary General

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all. It is a pleasure for me to address you today at the closing ceremony of the 4th and final ATU Preparatory Meeting for WRC-19.

I would like to thank the African Telecommunications Union for giving me the opportunity to join you. Thank you for your leadership in the preparation process for the WRC-19 for African countries.

I would also like to commend the host country for their excellent organization and great hospitality.

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Dear friends,

I am delighted be back in Africa.

The dimensions of this continent and its population are huge! A map shows USA, China, India, Europe and Japan, all fitting in the extension of Africa. Furthermore, it has about one billion people speaking over one thousand languages. It is truly impressive.

Africa can be proud of its rich and an incredible diversity of climates, fauna and nature. Or of the warmth of its people. Or the influence of its art on foreign

artists. As you know, African masks and wooden statues were a source of inspiration for European artists such as Picasso and Matisse.

But what strikes me the most is the resilience of the African people, and your capacity to strive and face unique challenges.

In the telecommunications sector, it could not be different. Africa now faces the challenge of taking connectivity to rural and remote areas, to areas where there is a lack of digital skills and literacy, or lack of local and relevant content. And to add to the challenge, services and devices should be made affordable enough to grant access to the mass of the population.

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Dear Colleagues,

While the challenge is big, the benefits derived from telecommunication services are very much worth the effort. All sectors of the economy profit from the evolution of radiocommunication services.

Broadband technologies are driving industry innovation and digital transformation around the world. As for satellite technologies, they enable the monitoring of life below water and life on land. They provide critical knowledge about our planet and how to better protect the environment amid the perils of climate change.

Telecommunications services are key to accelerating progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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Towards this end, I understand these last days of meetings have been of utmost importance for the Region. You have much to be proud of.

- 1- The African Common Proposals to the WRC-19 and to the RA were considered and adopted! They reflect the African aspirations towards *supporting the continued growth of ICTs including supporting the rural coverage agenda*.
- 2- We are launching in close collaboration with the ATU a Project on the optimization of the GE84 Plan (FM Plan) for Africa which seeks to optimize the FM plan in order to identify new additional channels and support the continued growth of FM broadcasting in Africa.
- 3- A project is also being launched on the development of spectrum management toolkits which aim at putting together best practices and guidelines.

- 4- And prior to this meeting a workshop for woman delegates was held to discuss initiatives to encourage female participation and leadership in the WRC process and ICT policy activities.

Congratulations for your accomplishments! They will certainly yield positive results in the near future.

Allow me to emphasize further, the first two major achievements of this meeting.

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Firstly the preparation towards WRC-19.

The fast pace of innovation has heightened the expectations on the next World Radiocommunications Conference to satisfy an increasing range of demands on the spectrum and orbit resources.

The success of the conference depends heavily on the outcomes of meetings like this. The fundamental goal of the conference of achieving global spectrum harmonization relies on the discussions and consensus obtained within the different regions prior to the deliberations that will take place in Sharm-El-Sheik.

And ATU has had an instrumental role in assisting its members in preparing for ITU global conferences.

The definition of your common aspiration has acted as a beacon to the 46 member states of the ATU guiding the way towards the adoption of the African Common Proposals, and it will surely continue guiding your work during the WRC.

On a practical note, when submitting African Common Proposals to the WRC, I strongly encourage you to the use of the Conference Preparatory Interface. This interface has embedded all the CPM methods within the software and will greatly facilitate your work.

I also invite you to prepare in advance your trip to Sharm el-Sheikh. In particular, to look into the webpage of the host country to obtain all logistic information regarding hotels and visas. The ITU has been working hard together with the Host Country to ensure everything is in place for you.

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Now I move on to the second point I would like to make, regarding the launch of the Project on the optimization of the GE84 Plan for Africa.

It pursues the continuous and successful cooperation between the ATU and the ITU that we have experienced in the past. I recall the GE06 frequency coordination meetings to enable additional Digital Terrestrial Television frequency channels in the UHF band below 694 MHz and the release of the 700 MHz and 800 MHz for mobile services. Africa was the 1<sup>st</sup> Region to accomplish and achieve the replanning in the UHF Band, thanks to the involvement and the support of high authorities of the African countries and ATU.

I am confident that the same support will be provided to the starting GE84 Optimization Project, which is intended to achieve an efficient use of the 87.5-108 MHz band for analogue sound broadcasting and enable the assignment of new frequencies for radio broadcasting to mitigate the increasing need for additional frequencies in African countries.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please count on the ITU and on me personally to support your endeavour towards developing radiocommunications in Africa.

Such a massive and impactful continent will have yet another opportunity to show its resilience and unite around the common aspiration towards *supporting the continued growth of ICTs including supporting the rural coverage agenda*.

I wish you all a safe return home and I hope to see you all soon in Sharm-El-Sheik.