

# Malabo Declaration on Sustainable Digital Transformation, Climate Action and Youth Empowerment

Malabo, 22 May 2026



## PREAMBLE

We, the participants in the 16th Symposium on ICTs, the Environment, Climate Change and Circular Economy, held in the city of Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, from 19 to 22 May 2026, under the theme:

### “Driving Digital Climate Action through Standards for Environmental Sustainability and Circular Economy”

organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Ministry of Transport, Telecommunications and Artificial Intelligence Systems of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in collaboration with international partners, the private sector, academia, Multilateral Environmental Agreements and organizations of the United Nations system, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Acknowledging the diverse contexts, capacity levels and financing constraints faced by African nations, and the need for flexible, context-adapted implementation approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions,

## RECALLING:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to education, gender equality, innovation, infrastructure, climate action, sustainable consumption and production patterns and international partnerships;
- The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the need to accelerate mitigation, adaptation and climate resilience measures through sustainable technologies;

- The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the need to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of hazardous chemicals, Persistent Organic Pollutants, hazardous and other wastes, including e-waste;
- The Nairobi Declaration on Environmentally Sound Management of Electrical and Electronic waste under the Basel Convention;
- The United Nations Global Digital Compact, aimed at bridging digital divides, strengthening responsible governance of artificial intelligence and promoting an inclusive digital economy;
- The African Union Agenda 2063, the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030), the Smart Africa initiative and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);
- Relevant ITU resolutions and recommendations relating to sustainable ICTs, energy efficiency, circular economy, e-waste management and digital climate action;

### **RECOGNIZING:**

The strategic role of digital technologies — including artificial intelligence, advanced networks, cloud computing, the Internet of Things and satellite systems — as drivers of economic development, social inclusion and innovation , whilst acknowledging their adverse impacts on the environment;

- The need to build resilient, sustainable, secure and energy-efficient digital infrastructure that, from its design and deployment, includes life-cycle considerations to reduce climate impacts through energy efficiency, low resource use and environmentally sound management of e-waste;
- The need to build a circular ecosystem in the African region, to enhance e-waste collection, life extension of e-equipment, recycling and final disposal, while creating green jobs, protective of human health and the environment;
- The potential of the digital economy to generate employment, strengthen entrepreneurship and create new opportunities for African youth;
- The importance of strengthening regional innovation, intellectual property and technology acceleration ecosystems, including incubation and technology matchmaking platforms that support African start-ups and facilitate access to knowledge, financing, markets and environmentally sound technologies;
- The urgency of narrowing the digital divide;
- The responsibility of addressing the growing environmental impact resulting from mismanaged e-waste and the need to create knowledge and finance treatment capacities to handle all e-waste and components thereof safely, while maximising local beneficiation opportunities based on circular economy approaches;
- and acknowledging the increasing energy consumption of the ICT sector further exacerbated by the expansion of AI applications.

## **WE DECLARE:**

### **1. Sustainable digital infrastructure**

To promote the development of green, resilient and efficient digital infrastructure, including sustainable data centres, resource-efficient ICT products, next-generation networks and technological solutions, that take into account life-cycle approaches to reduce climate impacts, in line with the principles of the circular economy, energy efficiency, efficient resource use, and environmentally sound management of e-waste. This includes promoting interoperable Digital Product Information Systems to support sustainable value chains and data-driven decision-making.

### **2. Innovation and technology entrepreneurship**

To foster digital and sustainable innovation ecosystems through the establishment of ICT business incubators and accelerators, as well as technology hubs and regional collaboration platforms, that facilitate intellectual property management, technology commercialisation and matchmaking with particular attention to young talent, African entrepreneurship and technology start-ups, promoting local digital solutions, including those based on artificial intelligence.

### **3. Artificial intelligence for sustainable development**

To promote the safe, ethical, inclusive, resource-efficient and responsible use of artificial intelligence to support economic development, environmental sustainability, the modernization of public services and the improvement of people's quality of life. Special emphasis should be placed on developing local and multilingual AI systems that reflect diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. AI in local languages can strengthen digital inclusion and improve access to services and education for all communities.

### **4. Youth and digital skills**

To strengthen training programmes in digital skills, innovation, artificial intelligence and STEM disciplines, with particular attention to the meaningful participation of women and girls, facilitating opportunities for employment, awareness of e-waste challenges and opportunities, self-employment and technological leadership for youth and women.

### **5. Circular economy and climate action**

To promote policies and mechanisms for ecodesign, the sustainable management of e-waste, and technology entrepreneurship across reverse value chains, including e-waste prevention approaches, reuse, environmentally sound recycling and final disposal, energy efficiency and the progressive decarbonization of the digital sector.

In this context, stakeholders are invited to explore, where appropriate, the use of digital tools, including through interoperable Digital Product Information Systems, that facilitate transparency and the availability of information throughout the product life cycle, thereby supporting informed decision-making by consumers, businesses and public authorities.

### **6. International and Regional cooperation**

To strengthen cooperation among governments, regional bodies, international organizations, Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the private sector, academia and civil society by promoting strategic partnerships, technology transfer, knowledge sharing and resource mobilization to accelerate sustainable digital transformation.

This includes support, as appropriate, for strengthening the institutional capacity of governments, training providers and civil society organizations, including through local capacity-building ecosystems.

Collaboration is also encouraged around approaches based on international standards that facilitate the interoperability and scalability of sustainable digital solutions in line with countries' priorities and including Basel Convention technical guidelines for environmentally sound management of e-waste.

## **COMMITMENTS**

Participants commit to:

- Supporting the harmonised development and implementation of national, regional and international policies that promote sustainable and inclusive digital transformation;
- Strengthening South-South, regional and triangular cooperation in digital innovation, artificial intelligence, climate action and environmentally sound management of e-waste;
- Promoting the active participation of youth and women and persons with disabilities in digital transformation and technology governance processes;
- Encouraging public and private investment aimed at the development of sustainable and accessible digital infrastructure;
- Catalysing investments in technical entrepreneurship for the creation of a circular ecosystem in the African region, green jobs and public-private partnerships for environmentally sound management of e-waste;
- Promoting the adoption of national and regional frameworks for including life cycle solutions to reduce carbon footprint of digitalization, and the adverse effects of e-waste generation on human health, vulnerable populations such as women and children, and on the environment;
- Mobilizing financing for implementation through strengthened partnerships, donor coordination and, where appropriate, dedicated financing mechanisms, in order to support sustainable digital transformation initiatives, particularly in least developed and lower-middle-income countries;
- Supporting regulatory frameworks and public policies that stimulate innovation, technology entrepreneurship and the African digital economy, including the creation and strengthening of ICT business incubators and accelerators;
- Encouraging cooperation initiatives and peer learning to exchange experiences on digital circular economy tools, on a voluntary basis and adaptable to national priorities.

## **CALL TO ACTION**

We call upon the African Union, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Member States, African regional organizations, the United Nations system, Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the private sector, academic institutions, civil society organizations to

support the effective implementation of this Declaration through strategic partnerships, cooperation programmes, technology and knowledge transfer and financing for innovative initiatives.

We also encourage relevant stakeholders to support, as appropriate, the development of baseline information and voluntary follow-up approaches to inform progress in sustainable digital infrastructure, digital skills development and policy adoption.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

This Malabo Declaration reflects the shared determination to advance towards a sustainable, inclusive and people-centred digital transformation capable of strengthening climate resilience, a circular economy and accelerating economic development while creating new opportunities for African and global youth.

Adopted in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, on 22 May 2026.