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Regional Development Forum for Africa: Moving from dialogue to impact for digital transformation

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 26 May 2026

The annual ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR), held on 25 and 26 May 2026 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, welcomed around 300 participants representing 36 Member States, Regional Organizations, UN specialized agencies, Sector Members, Academia and other stakeholders to discuss priority development issues for the region including the implementation of the new Regional Initiatives adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2025 (WTDC-25).

The Forum was hosted by the Government of Zimbabwe and organized in close cooperation with the African Telecommunications Union (ATU). It was chaired by Dr Gift Kalisto Machengete, Director General of the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ).

“As delegates engage in the discussions over the next two days, the focus must remain on actionable partnerships, regional regulatory interventions, and a shared commitment to build a digital future where no individual and no community is left behind,” said Hon. Tatenda Mavetera, Minister of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services of Zimbabwe in her opening address.

Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau, said: “We meet at a critical juncture. The world is racing toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa is determined to define the terms of its own digital future. This year’s RDF theme— *Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future*—is not just a slogan: it is a security strategy for Africa’s economic sovereignty.”

“This Forum is unique because we are moving from dialogue to impact, and from discussions to tangible results, ensuring that connectivity is no longer a privilege for the few, but a right for all.”

At the Forum, participants reported on the state of digital development and trends in the region and the outcomes of WTDC-25.

Participants discussed digital infrastructure for universal and meaningful connectivity, the implementation of the Regional Initiatives and ITU's role in the UN system and its contribution at regional and country levels to foster digital development.

The Regional Partner2Connect Matchmaking Roundtable sessions allowed participants to match countries' and regional needs with stakeholders' interests to support digital development in Africa.

"The Regional Development Forum for Africa represents a unique opportunity to discuss the implementation of the Regional Initiatives for the region, focusing on resilient and digital infrastructure, inclusive and trustworthy AI ecosystems for socio-economic development, cybersecurity, digital applications and innovation, and sustainable funding mechanisms for digital transformation," said Dr Emmanuel Manasseh, Director of the ITU Regional Office for Africa.

Announcements

During the Regional Development Forum, two announcements were made:

- The launch of the National emergency telecommunication plan (NETP): Model framework for West Africa. This model sets out strategies and frameworks for using information and communication technologies effectively across the disaster management cycle to strengthen preparedness and resilience. It builds on the existing framework for Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, developed in 2024 and now moving into regional implementation.

- A partnership between ITU, ATU and ICANN on regional technical collaboration to strengthen digital infrastructure in Africa.

The draft RDF outcome report will be available on the RDF Africa website on 27 May at 18:00 CEST.

Resources and background information:

- RDF-AFR website
- RDF-AFR photos
- RDF-AFR highlights video

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For questions, please contact:

ITU Regional Office for Africa
Phone: +251 11 551 4977/4855
Email: ITU-RO-Africa@itu.int

About the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations agency for digital technologies, driving innovation for people and the planet with 194 Member States and a membership of over 1,000 companies, universities, civil society, and international and regional organizations. Established in 1865, ITU coordinates the global use of the radio spectrum and satellite orbits, establishes international technology standards, drives universal connectivity and digital services, and is helping to make sure everyone benefits from sustainable digital transformation, including the most remote communities. From artificial intelligence (AI) to quantum, from satellites and submarine cables to advanced mobile and wireless broadband networks, ITU is committed to connecting the world and beyond.

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