



**2026 ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa
(RDF-AFR)**

*Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for
an inclusive and sustainable digital future*

**25-26 May 2026
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

Event website: <http://itu.int/go/RDF-AFR-26>

CONTRIBUTION FORM

This form is intended to collect inputs from stakeholders contributing to the implementation of the Baku Action Plan and the ITU Regional Initiatives for Africa (2026–2029).

ORGANIZATION: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

FOCAL POINT: Pierre Dandjinou, Vice President, Stakeholder Engagement – Africa

TITLE: Advancing Universal Acceptance for a Multilingual Internet | The ICANN-ITU-ATU Collaboration through the Coalition for Digital Africa

DESCRIPTION OF ACTION: [Provide a brief description up to 500 words] **Advancing Universal**

Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet

Advancing Universal Acceptance is essential to building a multilingual Internet that works for everyone. (UA), which ensures that all valid domain names and email addresses are accepted, processed, and displayed correctly across Internet-enabled software applications and systems.

Although the technical standards already exist, many software applications, websites, and digital services have not yet been updated to fully support them. As a result, millions of users are still unable to use the Internet fully in their own languages and scripts. Supporting the use of different languages and scripts online is a global priority. This priority is reflected in the WSIS+20 Outcome Document and the WTDC 2025 Declaration, and it aligns with ICANN's Strategic Plan for 2026–2030, which emphasizes advancing UA awareness and adoption globally, including in Africa.

ICANN supports this work by helping higher education institutions become UA-ready, and by encouraging the inclusion of the technical concepts of UA and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) in academic curricula. In addition, ICANN works with DNS industry stakeholders to improve the UA compliance of platforms and services by raising awareness, building technical capacity, and promoting collaboration to integrate UA into digital services.

Since 2023, ICANN has organized UA Day events in collaboration with UNESCO and the global community. To date, 167 events have been held across 82 countries in 39 languages, including 54 in Africa. More than 30 additional events are being organized in 2026, including at least nine in Africa. ICANN and UNESCO have also developed a UA Policy Brief to raise awareness among

stakeholders. Expected to be published in mid-2026, the brief will support outreach efforts, particularly in the public sector.

In Africa, this work connects with the broader efforts under the Coalition for Digital Africa, which ICANN launched at the Internet Governance Forum 2022. Conceived by ICANN, the Coalition brings together partners committed to strengthening Internet infrastructure, expanding access, and supporting Africa's digital development, including ITU, ATU AfNIC, and other regional technical community partners.

Within this broader framework, the collaboration among ICANN, ITU, and ATU supports not only UA and multilingual access, but also wider capacity development and institutional readiness in areas that are critical to Africa's digital development. On 25 February 2026, ITU, ATU, and ICANN held a joint webinar for African Member States and launched a call for expressions of interest to identify capacity-building needs and priorities. Requests were subsequently received from Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Zimbabwe, as well as from the Economic Community of Central African States, representing 12 countries, and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, representing 18 countries.

These requests span a range of areas, including Internet governance, participation in ICANN processes, understanding Internet infrastructure, DNSSEC implementation, and DNS abuse mitigation. The ITU Regional Office for Africa and ICANN are currently processing these requests, with initial activities expected to begin in June 2026. Progress will be presented later in the year, ahead of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2026.

The ITU Africa Regional Development Forum 2026 will provide an important platform to present this work, highlight early progress, and strengthen collaboration in support of Africa's digital development.

COUNTRIES in FOCUS: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe, Botswana, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Kingdom of Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.

YEARS of IMPLEMENTATION: [Tick the relevant boxes]

☒ 2026

☒ 2027

☒ 2028

☒ 2029

RELEVANT ITU REGIONAL INITIATIVE: [Tick the relevant boxes]

☒ AFR1: Resilient digital infrastructure and universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity for sustainable development

☐ AFR2: Developing an inclusive, trustworthy artificial intelligence ecosystem in Africa for socio-economic development

☒ AFR3: Building trust, safety and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technologies

☐ AFR4: Development of digital applications, micro, small and medium enterprises and digital innovation ecosystems

☐ AFR5: Sustainable funding mechanisms for Africa's digital transformation

Please find more information on the ITU Regional Initiatives 2026-2029, as defined by WTDC-25, [here](#).

RELATED ITU-D PRIORITIES AS DEFINED BY THE ITU WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2025 [Tick the relevant boxes]

- ☐ Affordable connectivity
- ☒ Digital Transformation
- ☐ Enabling policy and regulatory environment
- ☐ Resource mobilization and international cooperation
- ☒ Inclusive and secure telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development

Please find more information on the ITU-D Priorities, as defined by WTDC-25, [here](#).

RELATED PARTNER2CONNECT FOCUS AREAS [Tick the relevant boxes]

- ☒ Focus Area 1 – ACCESS: Connecting people everywhere
- ☒ Focus Area 2 – ADOPTION: Empowering communities
- ☐ Focus Area 3 – VALUE CREATION: Building digital ecosystems
- ☐ Focus Area 4 – ACCELERATE: Incentivizing investments

Please find more information on the Partner2Connect Focus Areas Action Framework [here](#).

RELATED WSIS ACTION LINE: [Tick the relevant boxes]

- ☒ C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development
- ☐ C2: Information and communication infrastructure
- ☒ C3: Access to information and knowledge
- ☒ C4: Capacity building
- ☒ C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- ☐ C6: Enabling environment
- ☐ C7: ICT applications
- ☒ C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- ☐ C9: Media
- ☐ C10: Ethical dimensions the Information Society
- ☒ C11: International and regional cooperation

RELATED GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT: [Tick the relevant boxes]

- ☒ 1: Close all digital divides and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals
- ☒ 2: Expand inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all
- ☐ 3: Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promote human rights
- ☐ 4: Advance responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches
- ☐ 5: Enhance international governance of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity

RELATED SDG: [Tick the relevant boxes]

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| ☐ SDG 1: No Poverty | ☒ SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities |
| ☐ SDG 2: Zero Hunger | ☐ SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| ☐ SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being | ☐ SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production |
| ☒ SDG 4: Quality Education | ☐ SDG 13: Climate Action |
| ☐ SDG 5: Gender Equality | ☐ SDG 14: Life Below Water |
| ☐ SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation | ☐ SDG 15: Life on Land |
| ☐ SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy | ☐ SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions |
| ☐ SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth | ☐ SDG 17: Partnerships for the SDGs |
| ☒ SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | |