



2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs

– Digital development, partnerships and funding

5 to 7 October 2020

(Rev.1)

PREPARATORY SESSIONS – 5 October 2020

On 5 October 2020 Zambia virtually hosted the 2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa preparatory sessions. The virtual sessions were held with 135 participants. As the RDF would be showcasing digital development efforts in Africa and inspire the next steps in implementing activities, projects and the regional initiatives, member states were invited to submit written contributions on their projects, activities and ideas for the future.

Informed by the theme of the RDF ‘Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs – Digital development, partnerships and funding’, more than thirty written inputs and proposals were received and have been made available on the ITU website.

Prior to the breakout sessions, ZICTA Director General, Eng. Patrick Mutimushi welcomed participants with a call for member states to share experiences and best practices that can help to drive the regional and continental ICT agenda far and beyond the planned national and regional goals. Mr Andrew Rugege, Director, Regional Office for Africa – ITU emphasised the need for the meeting to focus on digital development projects in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda.

Member states presented the main insights from their contributions under five thematic focus areas corresponding to the ITU regional initiatives for Africa 2018-2021, namely,

- a. **AFR1:** Building digital economies and fostering innovation in Africa
- b. **AFR2:** Promotion of emerging broadband technology
- c. **AFR3:** Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technology
- d. **AFR4:** Strengthening human and institutional capacity building
- e. **AFR5:** Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting

To get an overview of the current state of play, the contributors addressed two main questions, namely;

1. What good practices can be amplified from contributions and how?
2. What are the identified gaps based on our systemic enablers for digital transformation?

Guided by the thematic focus areas, **Zimbabwe** led the contributions on Africa Regional Initiative 2 (AFR2: Promotion of emerging Broadband technologies), **Ghana** on Africa Regional Initiative 5 (AFR5: Management and monitoring of the Radio-frequency Spectrum and Transition to Digital Broadcasting), **Cote d'Ivoire** on Africa Regional Initiative 3 (AFR3: Building trust and Security in the use of telecommunication/Information Communication technology), **Kenya** on Africa Regional Initiative 4 (AFR4: Strengthening Human and Institutional Capacity building) and **Zambia** led the contributions on Africa Regional Initiative 1 (AFR1: Building Digital Economies and fostering Innovation in Africa).

A number of good practices emerged that merit further exploration and the identification of some significant gaps. Moreover, numerous partnerships were shared which in themselves can serve as good examples for digital development projects and initiatives. These ranged from topically focused partnerships (such as cybersecurity and Child Online Protection), partnerships within a specific or across stakeholder groups (government, private sector and academia) to partnerships that had emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The session also identified gaps with respect to systemic enablers of digital transformation including changing and emerging technologies. The contributions identified a mix of gaps that address key issues on the continent. It became clear that some of the gaps may already have some tools, methods and frameworks to address, while others require continued elaboration.

The nature of the challenges at hand also varied from being national to regional in scope. To name a few:

Stakeholder engagement and partnerships:

- There is a need to exploit synergies with key government ministries to achieve universal access obligations.
- There is a lack of coordination with key development partners especially for road accessibility and power.

Skills and capabilities:

- There is need to address skill gaps amongst populations in developing countries.
- The majority of the population in Africa is disadvantaged and unable to fully partake in the evolving digital economy.

Policy and regulation:

- There is need to enact other relevant legislation such as data protection, electronic transactions so that all aspects of the digital legal space have clear guidelines.

Through the discussions, it emerged that all the enablers for digital transformation, such as vision and strategy, capital, market, infrastructure, policy, culture and talent exist, however, they need to be leveraged, coordinated and scaled to accelerate achievement of national and regional development efforts towards the SDGs.

To explore further what could be considered good practices worthy of scaling and what a good mix of projects and initiatives could look like, the participants considered the following questions:

1. What synergies can we build at the regional level to accelerate existing initiatives and how?

2. What can we do to close identified gaps with new projects (and re-think existing projects), partnerships and funding?

As the foundation has been laid for such discussions leading up to the Forum through the day of preparatory co-creation sessions, the actual RDF could determine a roadmap to continue exploring together how to address the identified gaps, and beyond.

This proposal was presented to the RDF for consideration and further elaboration.

RDF-AFR DAY 1 – 6 October 2020

Welcome Remarks

The Master of Ceremony, Mr Grevazio Zulu welcomed the delegates and shared the housekeeping rules and connection details. Mr Zulu then invited Mr Andrew Rugege, Director, Regional Office for Africa, ITU for the opening of the meeting.

Brief Remarks from Mr Andrew Rugege, Director, Regional Office for Africa, ITU

In his opening remarks, Mr Andrew Rugege thanked the Honourable Minister Mutotwe L. Kafwaya, Minister of Transport and Communications of the host country, Zambia, through the Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Transport and Communications, Eng. Misheck Lungu and the people of Zambia. He further thanked all dignitaries from the host country, Member states, ITU and other cooperating and partner organizations.

The Master of Ceremony thanked Mr. Andrew Rugege for his opening remarks and invited Mr John Omo, Secretary-General, African Telecommunications Union to give his remarks. He informed the delegates that the 2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa was focused on digital transformation to accelerate achievement of SDGs through digital development, partnerships and funding.

Address by Mr John Omo, Secretary-General, African Telecommunications Union

Mr John Omo, in his opening statement expressed his satisfaction on the power and role of ICT in bringing all stakeholders together and the approach taken by the 2020 RDF to address the challenges encountered by member states during implementation of the projects under the five (05) Regional Initiatives that came out of the WDTC-17 (World Development Telecommunication Conference – 2017). He emphasised that more partnerships, and leveraging existing ones, were paramount for WTDC-21 (World Telecommunication Development Conference -2021) preparations, taking also into consideration the ITU/BDT reforms. He also pointed out some success stories in countries like Niger and Rwanda.

Mr Omo commended the ITU Regional Office for Africa for organising the 2020 RDF taking into account ITU/BDT reforms in preparing for the WTDC-21 that was to take place next year in Ethiopia, and that RDF outcomes would not only serve member states but also other stakeholders. Mr Omo urged for greater involvement of African member states and stakeholders in preparation of WTDC-21 going forward, and invited delegates to the virtual regional preparatory meeting organized by the African Telecommunications Union and hosted by Sudan on 13 October 2020. He stated that connectivity was at the top of global agendas, and that the structure of RDF was not just about discussion but works done too. Mr Omo added that there was need to build new models at the next meeting in Addis Ababa.

Address by Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau

In her opening remarks, Ms Bogdan-Martin highlighted the role of RDF in advancing connectivity to those yet to be connected and tapping into huge potential available in Africa. She mentioned the ITU's Connecting Humanity Study estimated an initial \$428 billion needed to connect the unconnected 3.6 billion people by 2030. Ms Bogdan-Martin emphasized how digital transformation could support and accelerate achievement of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

She further expressed her pleasure concerning RDF-AFR's strong focus on Digital development, partnerships and funding, adding that RDF-AFR would provide a platform to convene, share and exchange, and together co-create the future. She noted that ITU's efforts in Africa were aimed at helping to leverage the power of collaboration, to help all countries in the region access the support and investment needed to drive digital transformation and accelerate progress towards the SDGs, by 2030.

Ms Bogdan-Martin highlighted that COVID-19 had put a spotlight on connectivity, universal access and resilient ICT infrastructures, adding that it was evident what it meant to be connected. She indicated that everybody moved online overnight; our work, schools, shopping, but questioned what was happening to the 3.6 billion not connected? She pointed out that connectivity was now at the top of global agenda as it clearly came out at the UN General Assembly—Connectivity features prominently in the UN's 75th General Declaration, where it was stated: "Digital technology have a potential to accelerate the realization of the 2030 agenda, and we must ensure safe and affordable digital access for all." Ms Bogdan-Martin said this message was very clear at all levels during deliberations at the UN assembly, where the ITU was co-organizing.

She noted that there was no longer any doubt that ICTs underpinned every single economic activity and service as a vital deliverable mechanism for range of essential social services as well as a critical environmental protection. Ms Bogdan-Martin stated how in today's world robust and resilient ICT networks, including broadband, need to be considered basic infrastructure, as fundamental to social and economic health of nations and the people, as networks like water, roads or power. She further informed the participants that broadband was a catalyst that could accelerate progress toward the SDGs, such as new devices like low-cost Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, new delivery platforms like low cost satellites, and new applications like Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), that change the game.

Address by the Minister of Transport and Communications – Hon. Mototwe Kafwaya, MP represented by his Permanent Secretary, Eng. Misheck Lungu

Eng. Misheck Lungu expressed gratitude to the ITU for giving Zambia the opportunity to host the 2020 RDF – AFR virtually and commended the Secretariat responsible for the organization of the meeting. The Minister emphasized the commitment of the Zambian government to the growth of ICTs and explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had challenged everyone to revisit what was termed as the normal. He however, noted that technology had played a pivotal role in transitioning the country into the new normal, as he reiterated the importance of access to connectivity for school children. Eng. Lungu highlighted that the Zambian government remained committed to supporting innovation and the embracing of a SMART Zambia and a SMART Africa. He challenged all sector players to be vigilant in bringing digital transformation in the African Region, and highlighted the importance of home grown solutions to ensure that interventions are successful in the various member states.

Eng. Lungu stated that, about a year ago, ZMW280 million (Zambian kwacha) was spent on construction of telecommunication towers in Zambia and the value realization remains a blessing to this day. He implored member states to appreciate the value of service providers today as they

enabled societies to be connected. Eng. Lungu said since the introduction of 4G to the Zambian market, connectivity had greatly improved. He further requested the support of ITU to change the ways of embracing technologies and break barriers to entry, in order to allow digitalization at all levels of society and further facilitate for roll-out of online services like road tax online.

Election of 2020 RDF – AFR Bureau and Introduction of RDF Chair

Soon after the official opening, the Master of ceremonies Mr Zulu invited Mr Rugege to inform the meeting about the newly elected 2020 RDF-AFR Chair. Mr Rugege informed the delegates that the newly elected Chair of the Forum was Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) through Eng. Patrick Mutimushi – the Director General, while Uganda was elected vice-chair. The Master of Ceremonies Mr Zulu and the delegates congratulated the 2020 RDF-AFR Chair and invited him to the floor to give remarks.

Remarks by RDF Chair – Eng. Patrick Mutimushi

Eng. Mutimushi expressed gratitude for according Zambia an opportunity to host the meeting of such magnitude and Member States composition by the ITU was a rare privilege Zambia and ZICTA in particular could not afford to take lightly, and was a clear indication of how much trust and confidence the Union had in Zambia through ZICTA. He reiterated Zambia’s commitment to the initiatives and resolutions of the 2017 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-17) held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Eng. Mutimushi said the RDF-AFR five focus areas – (i) building digital economies and fostering innovation, (ii) promotion of emerging broadband technologies, (iii) building trust and security in the use of ICTs, (iv) strengthening human and institutional capacity as well as (v) management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting were critical in achieving the SDGs and also in contributing towards social and economic development for individual Member States and Africa as whole. He encouraged Member States to fully engage and share best practices on initiatives that have worked, adding that enhanced close collaboration and leveraging of opportunities were key if Africa was to change its ICT narrative. He ended by quoting Barak Obama – “Change will not come if we wait for others or another time, it is time for Africa to drive that change.”

Setting the scene: The RDF platform for collaboration on ICT and SDG related project implementation in Africa by Mr Andrew Rugege.

Mr Rugege set the scene for the meeting by presenting an overview of the RDF as a platform for collaboration in Africa. Specifically, he highlighted the following; Buenos Aires Action Plan (BAAP) Objectives, Regional initiatives, Regional Initiatives Implementation statistics, Synergies and bigger impact, activities and projects based on Regional initiatives as well as Co-creation activity and RDF towards a new Journey. During the presentation, Mr Rugege discussed the following:

- **BAAP Objectives**

Coordination – Modern and secure telecommunication/ICT infrastructure – Enabling environment – Inclusive digital society – Regional initiatives outlined – There is 1 or more projects in every regional initiative – There are 4 projects fully implemented as at 2018 – The RDF must be an engagement platform for members and stakeholders rather than reporting mechanisms. – Work in thematic clusters rather than silos. – BDT established 10 thematic priorities – All BDT work is mapped to these thematic priorities and spread across the world – Focus is more on impactful projects. – Through preparatory meetings to share experiences.

Next: hear about activities, about partners and stakeholders in the region. Hope to agree on a roadmap for digital transformation and the Africa we want.

- **Implementation statistics:**

4 Projects were implemented by end of 2019 – 16 ongoing – 2 initiated in 2020 – 4 planned – Operational Plan funded activities contributing to regional initiatives – Projects in every regional initiative – 5 of the ongoing projects are in building digital economy – 6 of the ongoing projects are in cybersecurity – 2 of the ongoing projects are incapacity development – 3 of the ongoing projects are in spectrum management.

Mr Rugege challenged member states to use RDF as an engagement platform for members and stakeholders rather than just a reporting mechanism. He also called for the need to build bigger and more impactful projects. Mr Rugege explained that as part of ITU's responses, 10 thematic priorities with a cluster of Headquarters and field professional staff had been established.

Virtual Round Table One: Collaboration for results and impact oriented regional actions from WTDC-17 and toward WTDC-21

This session was moderated by Mr Stephen Bereaux, Deputy Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau. Mr Bereaux introduced the eight members of the panel and also highlighted the Fit-for-Purpose approach of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), thematic priorities and theories of change. He then calls on each to make their interventions as follows;

Nicholas Williams, Manager, ICT Operations, Industry and Trade Development Department, African Development Bank elaborated the role of AfDB and other stakeholders in advising countries to bridge the resources gap through resource mobilization, creating enabling environment for investments, stable regulatory environment, optimizing available resources and devising a funding strategy. Going forward, he highlighted the importance of creating an environment for private sector financing and advised member countries to improve project preparation including addressing the lack of quality at entry for projects in general.

With regard to resource mobilisation, he stated that the AfDB looks for opportunities to invest in climates that support investment; stable regulatory environment which was important for the optimization of financing. Mr Williams stated that AfDB was more focused on private sector financing, and that there was a fundamental need to improve project preparation. He said this was observed as an existing gap in all sectors, though in ICT it appeared to be declining with everything being clearly laid out. Further, he highlighted that AfDB emphasized on the need for country governments to seek financing in ICT infrastructure through their Ministries of Finance.

Paul Landers, Head of Strategic Partnerships, Connect To Learn, Ericsson

Mr Landers shared on the involvement of Ericsson in the Giga initiative for connecting schools and communities. He explained that Ericsson was providing expertise in data science and artificial intelligence and was working with ITU to study possible broad financing models. Under Partnerships and Funding for digital transformation in Africa, he explained that Ericsson was focused on education as one of its key areas, and further indicated that the digitalization of education systems was now more than ever required since the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Landers also emphasized the importance of knowing the size of the problem to be able to map existing connectivity in schools. For instance, countries needed to answer basic questions such as "is there coverage and how reliable is it? If there is no connectivity, how big is the gap that needs to be filled? What are the financing mechanisms that can be leveraged?"

Alfie Hamid, Regional Manager Corporate Affairs for Africa, CISCO spoke to the Digital Transformation Centres (DTC) initiative that CISCO co-founded with ITU to support government to train citizens in basic and intermediate skills to ensure digital inclusive societies. He said CISCO is also working with governments to revise curriculums to include for up to date ICTs courses in schools. Mr Hamid noted that CISCO had been focusing on skills development, adding that in 2020 they had implemented Phase 1 in countries such as Zambia, South Africa, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. He added that much of the conversation was about how do we ensure that people in Africa have the necessary digital skills that will allow them to embrace the 4th Industrial revolution? Mr Hamid stated that CISCO's activities were aligned to a number of strategic goals of the ITU, and that the initiative was started in Ghana where trainers were trained to train others. This was also done in Zambia. He said CISCO also ran a conference across Africa in July 2020 for teachers and educators to use online resources for teaching, with a recommendation that the school curricula in the most schools in a lot of African Countries needed to be revised to enable children learn what is relevant today.

Helge Brochmann, NORAD, Norway also intervened on the Digital Transformation Centres initiative specifically in Ghana, a pilot project for 3 years to support the implementation of basic training activities to bridge the digital divide. Mr Brochmann pointed out that NORAD had a programme called digitization for development, and was entering an agreement with ITU on the DTC initiative. He explained that the ITU was a new cooperating partners with whom the collaboration is meeting a number of NORADs thematic concerns. NORAD is focusing particularly on Ghana where there are already existing activities. Also supporting programmes on building digital competencies, cooperation with ILO and GIZ.

Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Assistant Director General and Regional Director for Africa shared on ITU-ILO-AU joint programme on Boosting decent jobs and enhancing skills for youth in Africa's digital economy and its anticipated impact to bridge digital divide which had implications where only 40% of young Africans were using internet. ILO in its initiative with ITU recognized the Youth as having huge potential to drive the economy in Africa. According to ILO, the issues of major concern were to do with employment available for youth. ILO, ITU and AU have collaborated to promote youth skills development in ICTs, promotion of partnerships and addressing the existing gap. The programme was being implemented to achieve the following;

- a) Accelerated the transformation for digital acceleration through decent work; and supporting institutions for boosting demand, supply and intermediation.
- b) Leverage existing platforms, systems to address supply, demand and intermediation

Lacina Koné, Director-General, Smart Africa talked on the Smart Africa blueprints that have been developed in partnership with Africa member states.

The moderator answered 2 questions and closed the session thanking all panellists for their insightful interventions.

Virtual Roundtable Two: Implementation, Collaboration and Funding with a Focus on Networks and Digital Infrastructure, Cybersecurity, Emergency Telecommunications, Environment, Digital Policy and Regulation

During this session, it was indicated that the ITU study groups worked in various ITU thematic groups, and these groups were a platform offered to member states where they can participate and share their experiences and contribute to the strategic areas of the ITU. The groups allow for exchange of information from members states as well as members of the public, noting that in the current study cycle, cooperation had improved.

Dawit Bekele, Regional Vice President for Africa, Internet Society (ISOC)

Mr Bekele started by stating that Internet has made it possible for business continuity during the time of COVID 19, and that in the last 20 years, 40% of Africa has been connected to the internet. He however, noted that there continued to be connectivity gaps especially in the rural areas, hence the need for complementary solutions in communities. Mr Bekele added that in such situations, community networks then come in handy as they connect communities at affordable prices. He added that community networks help connect schools, hospitals and villages - to connect the unconnected. Mr Bekele explained that community networks were relatively cheap to deploy and the motivation was not for profit but rather to serve the unconnected. He however, indicated that unfortunately, barriers also existed with regard to digital skills for the communities as well as funding.

Ruth Berry, Acting Director for Bilateral Affairs, International Communications and Information Policy, U.S Department of State and Thomas Koutsky, USAID, United States of America

Ms Berry and Mr Koutsky spoke to USAID 's support for deployment of digital networks, and noted that Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership was a government effort to promote various areas in connectivity and cybersecurity. They mentioned that the State Department was looking to expand this initiative globally so as for the initiative to achieve its objectives. The programme allowed for the State Department to work with other stakeholders who could provide funding for digital initiatives on this programme – ICT development and capacity building. Mr Koutsky noted that ProICT Project provided technical support with regard to ICT policy issues, infrastructure policies, e-commerce frameworks and regulations.

Maria Ribeiro - UN Resident Coordinator, Zimbabwe

Ms Maria Ribeiro, UN Resident Coordinator for Zimbabwe started her contribution by indicating to the meeting the UN system in Zimbabwe had been looking at digital transformation as a concept that basically emphasised leaving no one behind. Ms Ribeiro said there had been efforts to expand digital tools to enhance digital access. She noted that the Giga school connectivity initiative had been initiated in the country and further that a telemedicine project had already been implemented in Zimbabwe with ITU. Ms Ribeiro added that using digital tools in promoting equity and accessibility was key, and that the UN country team had been trying to use COVID-19 as an opportunity for the use of digital tools. She further pointed out that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Zimbabwe had begun to use its acceleration lab to understand what was happening to the food chains in the country, while in the areas of education – UNESCO and UNICEF had been working strongly with Ministry of Education on a resource platform for teachers. Ms Ribeiro ended her contribution by calling for a holistic digital society, and called on all actors such as CSOs, government, private sector and cooperating partners to come together for this cause.

RDF-AFR DAY 2 – 7 October 2020

The Chair, Eng. Mutimushi thanked all delegates for yet again being part of the meeting, and immediately introduced the next session which was to be chaired by Ms Elizabeth Migwalla, Senior Director and Head of Government Affairs, Middle East and Africa, Qualcomm.

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE THREE: Implementation, collaboration and funding – Projects, initiatives, and partnerships contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, WSIS Action Lines and regional priorities.

The Moderator and Fire-starter Ms Elizabeth Migwalla introduced the session by giving a general overview of projects, initiatives and partnerships that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. She then asked session contributors to and weigh in on the subject.

Bakary Doumbia - Acting Resident Coordinator for Senegal

Mr Doumbia began his remarks by stating what the Senegalese Ministry responsible for Finance received earlier this year, 2020 from the UN, and that the funding had come following the fact that the world was hit by the coronavirus pandemic. He said the allocation was made to countries which did not have humanitarian funding, with a sum of 1 million USD within the UN country team prioritized for the project funding towards ensuring good education for children who did not have proper access to new technologies in order for them to continue with their education. Four agencies were identified among the UN country team members as follows: UNESCO, UNICEF, UNECA, and ITU.

Jean-Paul Adam - Director Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Mr Adam began his remarks by stating how the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was leveraging data and technology tools to support inclusiveness in Africa. In the context of 2030 agenda and agenda 2063, but also building back better post COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the pandemic was a great disrupter, having changed the way we work for better. He went on to say that, science, technology and innovation were key drivers of growth, working by increasing productivity, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Mr Adam further stated that science, technology and innovation were also critical in addressing economic and societal challenges, and that the goal was to achieve recovery as well as leveraging digital transformations to achieving agenda 2030. He informed the meeting that regardless of the increasing recognition of the importance of science, technology and innovation (STI) in economic growth, there are challenges: 1) Limited distribution of the benefits of technological innovation particularly in Africa. 2) The need to recognize that African countries have not made the needed investment to transform their economies around the appropriate digital technology. 3) Policy makers operating in isolation from key partners and links of private sector and Academia. Mr Adam added that the last 10 years, the continent has recorded the highest global growth in Internet access with an increase of 23.1%. Noticing dramatic ascendant from 2.1 connected in 2005 to 27% in 2019, Africa remains the least connected region of the world.

He highlighted that successes were achieved in the mobile sector, penetration and innovation, and that accelerating digital economies had not translated yet in the internet use. Mr Adam explained that the digital economy was largely driven by the mobile revolution in the latest decade, with a potential for further growth through mobile connectivity and investments in internet and broadband. He indicated that by 2019, more than 76% of the population had a mobile phone subscription. Mr Adam further spoke to the use of technologies across sectors and that emerging technologies had important applications in healthcare, agriculture, energy and water management and quality, as well as monitoring development indicators to assess progress toward SDGs. He ended by further noting that increased access to electricity would have a large socio-economic and transformative implications for the continent, bearing in mind the fact that 43% of the population, over 500 million people and 50% of schools have no access to electricity.

Honourable Minister Ibrahima Guimba – Saidou, Niger

Minister Guimba – Saidou began by emphasizing that partnership and collaboration were priority areas the government of Niger had decided to focus on. The Minister highlighted steps the

country had taken to realise that its most important resource was human capital. He said Niger was a young country, and an extremely large country with a very low density of population.

He informed the meeting that the country had initiated the Niger 2.0 plan aimed at establishing the country's energy and resources in service delivery to the population with an emphasis on development goals and education. The Minister added that Niger had financing support from the World Bank, and the ITU-UNICEF Giga initiative for school connectivity.

Thomas Lamanauskas – ITU-D

Mr Lamanauskas shared information on the ITU Connect2Recover initiative which was launched with the help of Japan and Saudi Arabia. He said that Connect2Recover was aimed at reinforcing and responding to the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic.

During this session, suggestions were made as follows; There was need to develop methodology to do country assessments to enable countries assess how the infrastructure coped with the COVID-19. There is also need to address challenges induced by COVID-19 with specific intervention points. There is need to implement projects to test specific technological and organizational solutions, while looking into the specific areas.

Christine Sund – ITU-D

Ms Sund took up the opportunity to talk about the new initiative called POWER, and announced the collaboration with the US State Economic Bureau. This new partnership focuses on implementing global and regional projects and activities in advocacy, skills development and economic empowerment. She mentioned that tackling the digital gender divide from many different directions maximized effectiveness in building new opportunities for women at all stages of digital know-how, local and regional levels, relevant for this event and the participants in this RDF-AFR, the partnership would equal power and efforts on a number of different activities.

Ms Sund informed the meeting that the ITU had planned joint organizational advocacy and awareness events such as the women economic empowerment, a series of webinars on technology, policy topics for emerging women, ICT leaders, regulators and entrepreneurs and a train of the trainers programmes. She added that in order to create meaningful engagement between women leaders, technology and entrepreneurship and to support women's entrepreneurship and tech-innovations, the ITU host a number of private sector round table discussions. These are also aimed at exploring business development vehicles and resources that could complement other ongoing public sector programming.

Garam Bel – ITU-D

Mr Bel began by stating that there were a set of sub-targets relating to e-Waste; also known as electrical and electronic waste. The ITU hopes to reduce the waste by 2023. In the Africa region alone, it was estimated that 2.9 million metric tons of e-waste was generated in 2019. In the region, he stated that there were only 13 countries with a national e-waste policy, regulation and legislation in place. Mr Bel further disclosed that ITU/BDT had established a programme to foster a culture for honouring the e-waste performance and increase environmentally sound and nationally harmonized e-waste management policies globally.

He explained that the programme had three objectives: To deliver technical assistance towards adopting a harmonized methodology, quantifying the amount of e-waste being generated and also to provide technical assistance in the development of e-waste management policy and regulation. Mr Bel also added that the programme also focussed on the drafting and implementation of national e-waste management policies and to increase the engagement of

industry players in activities relating to e-waste management. Ending his remarks, he underscored that the program covered all types of e-waste. With an emphasis on the extensive discarding of ICT equipment.

Connected Youth in Africa

Moderator: Caecilia Nyamutswa, Director, Legal, Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), Zimbabwe and ITU-D Study Group 1 Question 5/1 Rapporteur

Ms Nyamutswa welcomed participants to the Connected Youth in Africa segment of the RDF. Talking about the ITU's youth strategy, she mentioned that ICT would enhance education, reduce youth unemployment and promote social and economic development. Secondly, she appealed for the need to equip youths with a variety of digital skills, and ensure affordable access to connectivity. She noted, 1.8 billion young people between the age of 10 and 24 across the world, with 90% living in developing countries, further elaborating that there could never be a better opportunity to discuss the ITU youth strategy, than the African development forum.

She highlighted how the strategy aimed at reducing the youth digital divide, improve the lives of young people, while ensuring the participation of youth in ITU key stakeholders for agenda 2030. Talking about the digital divide and the adverse of COVID-19, Ms Caecilia was compassionate towards the young people who lost access to education particularly those living in rural areas.

Anaëlle Cathelineau - Student from Ferney Voltaire, France

Anaëlle Cathelineau, a 17-year-old student from France who last year was the vice Secretary-General for the Future Casters Conference with the theme "technology for development". She had experience in organizing the Future Casters Youth Summit, and leaned how the ITU was working to help the youth. The summit gathered 700 students from 23 countries worldwide. Ms Cathelineau informed the meeting that the summit was attended by a lot of students who brought forward unique expertise and experience of technology, which allowed for real innovative and concrete resolutions to be adopted. She added that at the summit, ITU helped the youths by providing; resources and infrastructures, youth's opinions and ideas were listened too.

Ms Cathelineau noted that the event was ITU's first, and hopefully part of a long series of youth summits, with the next one scheduled to take place in November 2021 as a follow-up to the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Addis Ababa.

Ms Ruth Mulu - Student from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms Mulu, aged 19 years old student and an ambassador from Ethiopia who took part in the youth initiative in 2018 added her voice by narrating to the RDF forum how she came to know about ITU from the Initiative called African Girls Can Code. She had also participated in the Girls in ICT Day, including several other major events like the United Nations Summit in Geneva - Switzerland, the Paris Forum 2019, and the Future Casters, meeting upcoming ICT change makers and technology innovators who were striving for a greater future. As a student of medicine, Ms Mulu exemplified the use of technology permeating all boundaries as well as creating access to medicine easily. She would like to see affordable and efficient access to medicine and medical facilities through ICT and technology, even as she aspired to become a surgeon. She deserved to teach and shared her experience to other girls, bearing in mind the fact that there were about 60% of students in Africa who do not have access to secure and affordable Internet and ICTs.

Ms Mulu strongly pleaded to participating member countries to put in place measures aimed at making Internet access available for everyone across the region and continent.

Sylvia Poll - Head, Digital Society Division, BDT/ITU ITU Youth Strategy with projects and approach for Africa and WTDC-21

Ms Poll made a presentation on the Youth Strategy and began by thanking the earlier student contributors, Anaëlle Cathelineau and Ruth Mulu, encouraging the girls that their contributions gave hope to the delegates of what the youth are doing, as well as making mention of what the future holds. She extended an invitation for all the ITU members that were taking part in the Regional Development Forum for Africa to take part, and proactively engage in the implementation of youth strategy that ITU had developed last year.

Ms Poll noted that the ITU liked to see a world where every young person was connected, benefited from the digital economy and fully empowered to the access and use of ICTs. She said the Union would also like to reduce the digital divide on young people, including girls, in developing countries. Ms Poll explained that the strategy would be working in three big areas: to empower, engage and encourage participation. Building back better with digital in Africa – Roadmap development and journey ahead (digital development, partnerships and funding).

VIRTUAL REVIEW: Next steps for digital development, partnerships, collaboration and funding

Moderator: Andrew Rugege, Director, Regional Office for Africa, ITU

Mr Rugege welcomed delegates to the next session and reminded them about Monday's preparatory sessions, taking note of the generous contributions shared and how together co-created solutions and opportunities for challenges. He proceeded to remind everyone that a day before, he had presented the status of activities pertaining to the implementation of ITU initiatives in the region. Mr Rugege indicated that there were contributors during subsequent roundtable discussions such as private sector, development banks, and others who contributed their perspectives to digital development partnerships and funding. He further highlighted two important perspectives – the private sector and the UNRC system – which he said were necessary to build a roadmap going forward.

He went on to pose a thread of questions. "What should policymakers and regulators do to help the private sector meet the increasing demand of investment and infrastructure on one side, while addressing affordable connectivity and accessibility on the other? Noting that the cost of access and broadband capacities remain inadequate, especially in the rural communities which have the highest population. How can we extend meaningful connectivity to the remaining 50% unconnected in Africa? Mr Rugege then invited perspectives and contributions from the session contributors starting with one of the two Vice-Chair persons of IAGDI-CRO, Ms Oyeronke Oyetunde.

Oyeronke Oyetunde - General Manager, Regulatory Affairs, MTN and Vice-Chair, ITU Industry Advisory Group for Development Issues and Private Sector Chief Regulatory Officers' (IAGDI-CRO).

Ms Oyetunde expressed her singular honour to the unrelenting commitment of the private sector to support and partner with the ITU and member states in securing the success of digital development and regional initiatives, targeting the delivery of SDGs on the African continent. She went on to address the delivery of meaningful, secure, affordable and sustainable broadband connectivity for all in Africa, a goal which remained a core priority for members of IAGDI-CRO.

Ms Oyetunde further highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic had brought about a need for urgency in realizing the dividends of rolling out universal digital access services on the continent. She lobbied for a need to ensure the right balance between private and public sector involvement to ensure and enable policies and agile regulations that promote healthy competitive markets. While stressing the need to adopt technology and service neutrality as key principles to reform regulatory frameworks, Ms Oyetunde called for the need to promote continuing network resilience and encourage infrastructure investments in unserved and underserved economic areas of Africa. She pointed to the following key issues below which required urgent attention of Governments, policymakers and regulators should address:

1. The continuing availability of sufficient spectrum - on a more flexible basis.
2. The review and repurpose universal service funds - to meet broadband connectivity gaps.
3. The review of industry fees and taxation - in view of cost constraints brought by the economic impact of the pandemic - and the impending economic downturn.
4. The promotion of infrastructure sharing - particularly on a voluntary basis.
5. The harmonization and standardization of regulation - to promote secure and safe cross border flows, facing the challenges and promoting economic growth in Africa.
6. Address the pacing challenge, being the gap between regulation and technology advancements as part of creating an enabling environment to promote connectivity.
7. Explore new financing, funding mechanisms and business models to ensure a collaborative private public sector and cross-industry effort.

She challenged members to assess how addressing these issues would help connect the remaining 50% of who are unconnected on the continent, and seized the opportunity to invite all industry and private sector participants yet to become ITU-D Sector Members.

Ana Graca - Resident Coordinator in Cape Verde

Ms Graca indicated that the Cape Verde was one of the fastest growing countries in the digital space, and that Government aspirations included innovation, broadband connectivity, security of digital networks and others. She elaborated on Cape Verde's perspective on the cross-cutting nature of digital or of ICTs in the work of UN, and how ITU can support and collaborate with the UN country team to support the government's vision. Before providing perspectives to the questions, Ms Graca started by being thankful for the opportunity to participate in the RDF forum, and bring Cape Verde's perspective. She urged participants that working in complementarity with all of UN entities, government, private sector, to leveraging their mandates so as not to leave anyone behind. She said the role of UN entities such as ITU was fundamental to help deliver on the country's aspirations, a call she said was the heart of the UN development system. Ms Graca noted that the UN was better positioned to deliver on agenda 2030 by being more integrated, more responsive and more accountable to its member states with quality top-notch policy advice to be able to reach the furthest behind. She said the role of specialized agencies like ITU regardless of the fact that they are resident or non-resident is really critical to help deliver expectations.

Ms Graca believed that COVID-19 had brought to the forefront the challenges and opportunity of having digital tools, becoming the lifeline for millions of people, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his Roadmap for digital cooperation. She added that governments had identified, in the long-term Sustainable Development strategy, the ambition 2030 and all the sectional plans, the digital transformation of business, public administration and governance, as one of the five SDGs accelerators and one of the three major drivers for sustainable development in the country. Ms Graca told session that the Government proposed to transform Cape Verde into a cyber island as well as a centre for the development of a digital economy aimed at positioning the country as a service provider, referencing the region in terms of innovation and knowledge, anchored on the

strength of its human capital. She ended by stating that the Cape Verde's digital strategy was built as a key component of the country vision on digital transformation, and that utilizing partnerships from the UN agencies such as the Giga Initiative - to connect schools, government including other stakeholders.

Catherine Sozi, UN Resident Coordinator for Ethiopia

Ms Sozi reminded delegates that the digital revolution had brought about rapid technological change, transforming the way societies function, adding that ICTs served as accelerators for every single one of the SDGs. She said Ethiopia, as expressed in the 10-year perspective plan, sought to address and enlist the use of emerging technologies and had already started addressing issues like artificial intelligence, including humanoid and IoT in its digitalization programme.

Ms Sozi noted that the UN country team was looking to assist the Government to implement e-Government platforms which would address digital financial inclusion, connect schools, achieve digital gender parity and empowerment by ensuring that girls and boys had equal opportunities to prepare for the workforce of the future. She said it was critical that all member states had a framework for digital cooperation. The Resident Coordinator explained that the UN Sustainable Development framework and social economic recovery plan, after COVID-19, were some of the initiatives used to ensure each agency brought its core strengths to the table.

She mentioned how happy she was that ITU had developed a number of products and services that were offered to the coordinators who would help identify where synergies and collaboration were to be leveraged in the development and humanitarian space in the ICT. Ms Sozi explained that using presentation slides, Secretariat had shared an elaborate overview of the roadmap content which begun by reminding the delegates the theme - digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs digital development, partnership and funding.

After her presentation, the Chair requested the Secretariat to present the recommendations and roadmap for consideration.

Closing Remarks for the RDF-AFR 2020 Forum

Eng. Misheck Lungu – Zambia's Ministry of Transport and Communications Permanent Secretary

In closing the RDF-AFR Forum 2020, Eng. Misheck Lungu reiterated the emphasis by Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin had made that Africa's youthful population needed to be connected. Eng. Lungu affirmed that the RDF-AFR thematic areas were crucial in building the digital economy, promotion of broadband technologies, building trust and security, strengthening human and institutional capacity. He also stated that the strategic collaboration, innovation and partnership would help to transform and digitalize Africa. The Permanent Secretary was confident that the RDF-AFR forum had presented a fertile ground for sharing knowledge on ICT related issues, international best practices, for the various stakeholders in the industry. Eng. Lungu described the RDF-AFR as a platform that aimed at advancing the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields of ICT and related areas in particular science and technology as a vision by the African Union. He implored delegates and member states who participated in what he described as productive deliberations to remain committed to ideas of the African Union and ITU if they were to transform their economies using ICTs. The Permanent Secretary ended his closing remarks by

thanking the ITU Regional Office for Africa, ZICTA and staff at the Ministry for making the meeting a success.