

In response to the circular consultation letter concerning the GSR-20 Best Practice Guidelines Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-20), the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority has provided the following views, experiences on the requested information.

1. Demonstrating regulatory thought leadership for digital transformation

ICTs have become the foundation for every economic sector and a thing that is absolutely necessary for business performance and national growth. ICTs dramatically transform education, health care, environmental management, agriculture, trade and entrepreneurship, the provision of government services – and so much more. For this to happen, enabling frameworks of policy and regulation, and the right networks and services need to be put in place.

What is the best policy approach in enabling and repairing the digital economy to grow sustainably and meet social goals?

National and International policies play a vital role in enabling digital economy. The digital economy continues to evolve at breakneck speed, driven by the ability to collect, use and analyze massive amounts of machine-readable information (digital data) about practically everything. In Rwanda, different policies including the ICT Hub, broadband for all, Government digital transformation and digital literacy for all have been implemented for facilitating digital inclusion across the country. This is for building an inclusive country in which the digital economy works for everyone and everywhere. In that context,

In view of the cross-sectoral nature of digitalization, policy that can seek to incentivize different clusters within a country, a region and globally is important to the innovation and securing benefits and sustainably meeting social goals. This will also increase government, organization and individuals to shift to online interaction and services. It will also incentivize researchers for the practices in technology and innovation.

What have we learned from the COVID-19 crisis?

Like it happened in other nations, COVID-19 outbreak has accelerated the adoption of technology in Rwanda. COVID-19 nudged and accelerated public and private institutions, businesses and all of sector plays to adopt technologies that have for one reason or another been slow in adopting them. The COVID-19 calamity accelerated digitizing public services and processes, including facilitating secure and reliable ICT infrastructure, building affordable access to and delivery of public services

What should we focus on in regulation to prepare for the next 20 years?

The evolution of digital economy is closely associated with progress in several frontier technologies. The regulatory focus for the next 20 years should include ICT infrastructure sharing, cross-border and international policies and collaboration. The regulation should also be concerned about having to strong and effective regulatory frameworks for promoting inclusive innovation.

What are the key ingredients for effective, future proof policy leadership?

Proper Leadership is the key to development and inclusiveness of the digital economy. The Government of Rwanda adopted different policies aimed at transforming Rwanda into an IT-literate nation and making Rwanda a regional ICT hub. ICT human capacity building, availability of ICT infrastructure and access to affordable services, regional and international connectivity. The key ingredients to improve leaders' digital preparedness include:

- 1) Innovation and courage for taking calculated risks and empowering public and private sectors and businesses

- 2) Ability and flexibility to easily adapt to change and make necessary adjustments in the approach and process
- 3) Collaboration with people at all levels by considering the challenges and recognizing and support when it is needed,
- 4) Good understanding of the common elements and difference between technology and culture in the digital era.

What leadership skills are required for ICT regulators and policymakers?

For modernizing its key sectors, Rwanda has set a national goal based on an information-rich, knowledge-based society and digital economy. ICT regulators are required to have ICT specialist skills, management skills, and Legal skills.

2. Vectors of regulatory action: Inclusiveness, agility, and resilience

A first major challenge in technology regulation is how to keep up with technological advances. Further, we have identified a number of key actions that resilient leaders can take for boosting the readiness of the digital sector:

What transformative regulatory approaches are at hand to enhance the inclusiveness, agility and resilience of digital networks, traditional and digital players' business models and access to digital services?

Review regulatory frameworks and public policies to ensure that all players in the market have incentives to innovate, invest, and increase access to digital services.

How to boost the readiness of the digital sector to face unexpected events and emergencies and deliver up to the expectations despite the odds?

In a world that is changing fast, Governments, organizations and companies need to have space for creativity and learning from the previous changes. Continuing training and close collaboration at different levels are the most important to have good digital capabilities and the right people that deal with new changes, unexpected and emergencies and fund proper solutions.

What are the short, medium and long-term strategies for economic recovery and sustainable social development?

Public and private sectors should establish strong links between education and employment outcomes. In addition, Governments and organizations should support technical skills, development of appropriate skills, use of technology and initiatives in entrepreneurship.

3. Collaboration across sectors, cooperation across borders, and engagement across the boards

Enhancing digital cooperation will require both reinvigorating existing multilateral partnerships and potentially the creation of new mechanisms that involves regulators and a diverse spectrum of other stakeholders such as, governments, technologists, academics, and the private sector (ranging from small enterprises to large technology companies). Nevertheless, in this note, we could not offer the most effective ways to cooperate but stakeholders could approach digital cooperation using all available tools, making dynamic choices about the best approach based on specific circumstances. In areas such as cyber security, currently fragmented efforts need rapidly to coalesce into a comprehensive set of common principles to align action and facilitate cooperation that raises the costs for malicious actors. It may not yet be feasible to envisage a single global forum to house such capabilities, but there would be value in strengthening cooperation among existing initiatives.