

# **REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**



**Keynote address by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister  
Dr. Edouard Ngirente**

**At the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit 2022**

**Intare Conference Arena, Kigali | 02 June 2022**

- **Honourable Ministers here present,**
- **Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau,**
- **United Nations Youth Envoy,**
- **Generation Connect Visionaries Board Members,**
- **Young professionals, students, entrepreneurs with us today, in-person and virtually,**
- **Distinguished guests,**

### **A warm welcome to Rwanda!**

1. Let me start by congratulating Doreen, the Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau on this first Generation Connect Global Youth Summit and for choosing to host it here in Kigali, Rwanda.
2. It is very timely to hold this Youth Summit focusing on ***Shaping a safe, inclusive and sustainable digital future together - Leaving no young people behind***, ahead of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC).
3. The youth in every part of the world are playing a critical role in bridging the digital divide and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The digital economy is growing rapidly – with almost every aspect of our lives moving online, and massive economic opportunities being created.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the necessity for everyone to embrace the digital era. Therefore, opportunities ahead are indeed promising, but in order to fully tap into these opportunities we must ensure that no one is left behind.

▪ **Youth delegates,**

6. In order to prepare our young people to fully benefit, we first need to accelerate efforts to address the digital infrastructure divide globally.

7. Studies show that while 95 percent of the global population may have access to a 3G or 4G mobile broadband network, this access does not necessarily translate to meaningful connectivity or being connected.

8. Similarly, a report measuring *How Many Children and Youth Have Internet Access at Home* revealed that over two-thirds of school-age children between 3 to 17 years, roughly 1.3 billion people, and 63% of youth aged between 15 to 24 years lack internet access at home. This is a huge number.

9. Without affordable access to connectivity, majority of young people will not benefit from these opportunities, hence worsening the youth unemployment rates.

10. In Rwanda, we have embraced the use of digital technologies as an engine of transformation. Our National Strategy for Transformation (NST1/2017-2024) targets to ensure digital literacy for all youth (16 to 30 years) by 2024.

11. This will be done through the implementation of a national digital literacy program with the objective of achieving digital literacy of at least 60% among adults by 2024.
12. In addition, affordability remains a barrier to adoption, from device affordability to affordability of digital services and data.
  - **Distinguished guests,**
  - **Youth delegates**
13. In Rwanda, the Government has partnered with the private sector on many initiatives such as Connect Rwanda where more than twenty-five thousand (26,599) smartphones were provided to marginalized communities such as farmers, community health workers, women traders, and others.
14. However, the scale of the problem is so huge that we cannot do it alone and here is where the youth have an important role to play - your ideas, creativity and energy can contribute to addressing these challenges.
15. For instance, some of our young entrepreneurs in Rwanda are using Artificial Intelligence to make voice technology easily accessible by collecting voice and text datasets in Kinyarwanda, our national language, to address the barrier that language causes in digital literacy and adoption.
16. I am sure there are as many innovative solutions out there and our role as stakeholders should be to support the nurturing and scaling of these youth-led ventures.

17. Furthermore, we need to continue to invest in digital skills for our young people to succeed in the job market. Digital skills are increasingly becoming the foundation of all jobs. The good news is that the youth are the most technologically ready and more likely to connect than any age group.
18. This comes with both opportunity and responsibility. Reports indicate that over 200 million jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa will require digital skills by 2030. So, with 71 percent of the world's youth (aged between 15 and 24 years) using the Internet, most of these new jobs will be essentially for you, the youth.
19. Beyond skilling, the ability of innovators and entrepreneurs to access global markets and customers is remarkable with technology.
20. Today, an African fashion brand can easily reach customers in Asia and Rwandan developers can work for Japanese-based companies while here in Rwanda.
21. As a young person, having a global mindset and learning how to contribute to that global interconnection is key.
22. On the responsibility side, it is important that you are contributing to creating a safer internet and being responsible digital citizens. Today, we all spend more time in the digital world and cybercrime is on the rise and increasingly more sophisticated.
  - **Youth delegates,**
23. As governments and multilateral organizations, we are working to put in place the right policies and regulations to keep cyberspace safe both nationally and internationally.

- 24.** You too, can help in keeping the internet safe and positive, as you create and consume these technologies, by supporting awareness campaigns and building solutions that empower society to safely use technology.
- 25.** As I conclude, I would like to note that the pace of economic development and prosperity is increasingly linked to technology creation and adoption.
- 26.** Therefore, the extent to which our economies can grow will depend on the ability to ensure equitable access to technology as well as upskilling and reskilling our populations, especially the young people.
- 27.** These are global opportunities and challenges that require global cooperation. It is in this spirit that the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit is kicking off, because young people around the world are central to the vision to connect the unconnected.
- 28.** As young people, we call upon you to unite and build a digital economy that is inclusive to every person from any corner around the World.
- 29.** I thank you all for joining us here today and I wish you all a fruitful conference.

**I thank you so much.**