

**8TH WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

Kigali, 6 June 2022

**Opening address of H.E. Paul Kagame, President of
the Republic of Rwanda**

- **Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**
- **Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau**
- **Senior Officials**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning, and allow me to begin by welcoming you to Rwanda.

We are very happy to host you.

It is my pleasure to open the 8th edition of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, the first ever in Africa.

I thank the International Communication Union, under the leadership of Houlin Zhao, for the good work being done to bridge the digital divide.

We have seen notable improvements during his tenure.

In Rwanda, and all over the world, the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies.

But challenges still remain.

Access to high-speed internet has not kept up with the fast pace of digital transformation, and the digitization of the economy in general.

If such inequalities are left unchecked, development will accelerate more and more in some parts of the world, while elsewhere it slows down.

The numbers speak for themselves.

One-third of the world remains offline, and the majority are women in developing countries.

The responsibility to shape the future of the digital economy, and ensure no one is left behind, lies with all of us, working together.

No company, country, or institution has the resources, to do it alone.

We must therefore prioritize public-private partnerships, to expand affordable digital access, and equip vulnerable citizens with digital literacy skills.

The Partner-to-Connect Digital Development Roundtable happening during this conference, is a new opportunity available to us, which we should fully exploit.

As we strive to achieve universal and affordable connectivity, youth should be at the forefront.

Young people are already the most connected members of society. But that also means they are the most exposed to online safety and privacy risks.

In the case of Rwanda, for example, last year we passed a Personal Data Protection and Privacy Law, to create a safe enabling environment for both consumers and entrepreneurs.

The Covid pandemic has imposed huge costs on every country in the world.

One of the only silver linings, has been the demonstration of the power of digital connectivity as a tool for resilience, knowledge transfer, and economic growth.

We cannot let that go to waste.

Now, more than ever, is the time to act quickly and decisively, so that when we meet again in four years, we will have exceeded our expectations.

Once again, you are most welcome, and I hope you will feel at home during your stay with us.

I wish you all a productive conference, and I thank you for your kind attention.