

World Telecommunication Development Conference

Closing Ceremony Address

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The **Honourable Paula Ingabire**, Minister for ICT and Innovation of Rwanda, and Chair of WTDC-22,

Mr Houlin Zhao, ITU Secretary-General, and fellow ITU elected officials

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ITU's 8th World Telecommunication Development Conference in Kigali is coming to a close, with agreement on a Declaration and Plan of Action that I think every **one of us can be proud of**.

I salute this conference's commitment in the **Kigali Declaration**, "to spare **no effort** towards the expansion and use of telecommunications and ICTs and digital infrastructures, applications and services for building and establishing truly sustainable digital economies and societies."

It has been a **very intensive two weeks**, in which we have welcomed 2,152 delegates from 150 Member States, along with 340 Sector members and partners.

We've talked, ...we've walked, ...we've deliberated, ...we've agreed, ...we've even disagreed... we've compromised... we've partnered... we've danced a little... we've sipped a LOT of that amazing Rwandan coffee to keep us energized – and we've worked very hard – including over part of the past weekend.

We have discussed and debated 215 proposals.

And to the credit of every person in this room, we have succeeded in **finding consensus**, and in building the **solid global agreement** on core principles that has been the great talent of ITU and its delegates for 157 years.

In pursuing that agreement, we have been very **ably led** by our WTDC Chair, Minister Paula Ingabire, and I take this opportunity to personally thank her for her wisdom, her guidance, her incredible patience, her friendship, and her razor-sharp focus on advancing our work and ensuring we arrived at our destination in a timely manner.

I also want to take a moment to thank our amazing Host Country team, who brought all their efficiency, skill, and dedication to delivering a world-class conference experience to all WTDC delegates. A special thanks to Yves Iradukunda.

As Dr Kim stated yesterday, you have truly set the gold standard.

And you have done this in a record time, with less than 4 months of preparation! ... I believe this deserves a big round of applause!

Let me come to the core work of this conference – the thing that brings us together... from the **four corners of the world** – which is our shared commitment to forging a new Action Plan for the coming years.

An Action Plan that builds on the strengths of our Buenos Aires Action Plan, yet which is also adapted to meet the new challenges of our fast-evolving digital landscape.

A Plan which **amplifies** what has been working well,and which **rectifies** what has not.

Which opens doors to new types of collaboration, so that we can work more effectively **together** to achieve **that goal** of a fully connected planet by 2030.

At the opening of this event, I encouraged us:

- to be **bold**,
- to be **creative**,
- to dare to **go the extra mile**.

I challenged us to put the interests of **people** and **planet** first.

And I urged us to do **all in our power** to make this event a **landmark** in the history of global development, a conference that future delegates **will look back** to in our shared journey towards universal digital inclusion.

I think we **have risen to that challenge**, and I am immensely proud of what has been achieved here in Kigali.

- We have agreed **14 new Study Group Questions**.
- Confirmed a total of **28 Regional Initiatives**.
- Revised a total of **45 resolutions**
- And adopted **FOUR new Resolutions**

I look forward to **working with you all** to implement the Kigali Action Plan, and to use that ambitious blueprint to help map out a **better future for all**.

This Conference was enhanced by 3 ‘rights’... time, place, and people... as well as **three key levers** that have been instrumental in mobilizing the energy, innovation, commitment and engagement that the conference has mobilized.

The first lever was **Generation Connect Global Youth Summit**, which provided an amazing curtain-opener for us as we arrived in Kigali.

That inspirational event (entirely co-created by our youth) brought together engaged, energetic young people from around the world physically and virtually.

Our youth debated and discussed issues **from cybersecurity, digital transformation, emerging technologies, online protection, entrepreneurship, leadership and much more.**

It was clear that young people **don't want to** inherit their digital future, they want **to be part** of creating it.

As we leave Kigali ...we also take with us our very own Generation Connect song, ...composed by our young interns and sung by local musicians,as well as lots of memories and new friends.

The second lever of the Conference was the **ITU-D Network of Women** programme. A programme that had three outstanding events:

- a Network of Women luncheon, hosted by Qualcomm,
- the Network of Women Breakfast hosted by Australia,
- and of course, our **Network of Women Walk2Connect Walkathon** last Sunday morning, which many of you joined...

and may have suffered the day after, in particular if you joined the intensive aerobic workout that followed the walk

These events have helped strengthen the connection between female delegates, and to share our experiences, solidarity and commitment to gender empowerment in the digital sector.

And last but not least, the third lever of the conference, the **Partner2Connect Roundtable**.

This innovation **stands out** because of the extraordinary and unprecedented response from our members, and many new partners, too – and because of what **these pledges** could mean **for the lives** of those still digitally excluded.

This is where we really get the chance to put **actions into words**, to really **‘walk the talk’** and ramp up our partnerships to move the dial on connecting the unconnected.

As of this morning we have 418 validated pledges for an estimated financial value of over US\$25 billion.

I warmly thank every government and every entity that has committed resources through the P2C platform.

I also applaud this conference for adopting a new Resolution formalizing the **recognition and inclusion** of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition in ITU's ongoing work programme.

And I note that the P2C pledging platform remains open, and new pledges are still coming in...

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates,

Let me close by thanking the many, many people whose work has made this conference such a great success.

- Thank you to the ITU Secretary-General,
- my fellow elected directors,
- our amazing interpreters.
- thank you to our translators and captioners.
- thank you to the technical teams, both in the room and behind the scenes.
- thank you to our tireless organizing team,
- to our security team,
- and of course, to the truly extraordinary docs management team who made sure we always had the texts we needed.
- Thank you to the content team, comms team, NoW team, to the P2C team, and to our Global Youth Summit organizers.

And finally, a very special thank-you must go to my Deputy Director, **Stephen Bereaux**, who has been the overall coordinator for this event, and who has executed that role with enormous skill, efficiency, and relentless good humour...

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the start of this important conference, I mentioned one of my all-time favourite movies, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and spoke about that film's message around the **truly profound effect that our decisions can have on the lives others.**

I urged us to remember that, through our actions, **each and every one of us in this room has the power to change the world.**

I think we have **tried to do that here in Kigali** over the past two weeks, **and it is my great hope** that our work at this conference to bring the power of connectivity to all will rapidly usher in the chance to live ...a wonderful life... for people everywhere.

Thank you.