



DRAFT Opening Remarks by ATU Secretary General Mr. John OMO during the opening of the 1st Africa Group Preparatory Online Meeting for WTDC- 21

The Guest of Honour, Director General, TPRA Sudan, Dr Alsadig GAMALELDEEN
ITU BDT Director, Ms Doreen MARTIN-BOGDAN,
ITU BDT Deputy Director, Mr. Stephen Bordeaux
ITU Regional Director for Africa, Mr Andrew RUGEGE
Associate Members present
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank you all for accepting our invitation to be part of these deliberations that will be fundamental in raising our African voice at the forthcoming World Telecommunications Development Conference for the benefit of our communities.

Allow me also to thank the Government of the Republic of Sudan through the TPRA for kindly accepting to host this meeting online and for offering the chairmanship to guide in the deliberations. As it were, we looked forward to having a physical meeting in April 2020 in Sudan but due to COVID-19, the meeting was postponed. We are however grateful to ICT for it has enabled us to reconvene online and our appreciation go to Sudan for their commitment to ATU ideals and for maintaining their offer to host this meeting. Let me also thank the ITU for their continued support and assistance to ATU and its membership and more so for accepting to be with us here today.

Today, having a common understanding of the issues that we face and how telecommunications can downplay them is crucial for a number of reasons. As the torchbearers of the telecommunications development in Africa as mandated by the African Union (AU), we are privileged to use our diversity as a continent to give impetus to our discussions.

We are tasked with the responsibility of evaluating the outcomes of the previous WTDC-17 with a keen eye on the resultant agreements and their level of implementation across our continent. Therefore, it is our responsibility to determine the factors that come into play when conducting

this evaluation, cognizant of our rich diversity. In breadth, we will also focus our minds to regional initiatives and their resultant outcomes and impact for the last three years. This is a crucial activity since we are able to reflect on our challenges and agenda as a continent alongside international suggestions considered for our growth and development through telecommunications. The sector's growth in line with the resultant interventions as well as its impact on communities, economies and our cooperation could not be emphasised further through these deliberations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This 1st regional preparatory meeting gives us an opportunity to listen to you, our membership, and to hear the issues that you want to see discussed and addressed at WTDC-21 next year.

As you are aware, the WTDC-21 will be held for the first time in the African soil during the last quarter of 2021 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and it is upon us as a region to remain actively involved in the preparatory process and the during the actual conference as host of WTDC-21 in order to be the greatest beneficiaries of the outcome. I would therefore wish to encourage all the membership to devise a mechanism for greater involvement in the preparatory process for effective conversation on this matter. ITU already started the discussion on the reform process of streamlining and reinforcing the conference to ensure that we meet the ICT development agenda that the world sets for itself every four years. It is therefore important that we take advantage of this opportunity to shape the outcome of the next conference as I urge you to remain active in all activities towards the conference.

Finally, conscious of our unique attributes and expertise, this forum gives us a chance to agree on the preparatory process for the forthcoming WTDC. The COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively affected our economies and normal ways of engaging in communities, but it has also given rise to gaps that telecommunication can leverage upon to set the pace of contemporary communal engagements. Therefore, in as much as these preparations will consider our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, we will also sanction special consideration on the pandemic's outcomes so far and use them to enhance our individual and international collaborations as well as relevant partnerships during the conference. This will equally give us a chance to showcase our expertise and growth by developing the African common proposals/positions on the WTDC agenda items including derivative interventions based on the fight against COVID-19.

In Mahatma Gandhi's words, "let us be the change that we want to see in the world". In essence, let us use this opportunity to be the change that we want to see in Africa through telecommunication.

I look forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you!