



AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION  
L'UNION AFRICAINE DES TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS

## **African Telecommunications Union Secretary General's Message for the 2021 ATU Day Celebrations Under the Theme:**

### **"Digital Skills Development for Africa's Digital Transformation"**

Greetings!

We at the African Telecommunications Union are excited to welcome you to the 2021 ATU Day Celebrations.

On behalf of the ATU, I present our compliments to you and the offices you represent. It is indeed a great moment to share this journey with you; a journey that began 44 years ago on 7th December 1977 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia when the 12th Session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government, established the Pan-African Telecommunications Union (PATU) as a specialized agency of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) in the field of telecommunications/ICTs. PATU would later change its name to the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) on 7th December 1999.

From 1977 to date, 7th December, also known as African Telecoms/ICT Day, has been set aside to commemorate the establishment of the Union. The annual commemorations are usually based on a yearly theme approved by the ATU Administrative Council. The day presents an opportunity for the ATU Membership and ICT stakeholders in Africa to reflect and strategize on the role of ICTs in Africa's socio-economic development. To commemorate the day, the Union and her Membership implement activities and events based on the theme.

The theme adopted by the 2021 Administrative Council for this year is: **"Digital Skills Development for Africa's Digital Transformation"**.

This is a timely theme since Africa as a continent is working towards digital transformation. We must catch up with the rest of the world in the uptake of emerging technologies such as 4IR that are globally revolutionizing various facets of social, economic activities and increasing efficiency, productivity, and value. Additionally, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa's economy has been devastating. Now more than ever, the transformative nature of emerging technologies is needed to benefit the African agricultural, financial, health, mining, tourism, and transportation sector, to mention a few.

This theme is also consistent with pillar 4 of the ATU 2019-2022 Strategic Plan on Promotion of Innovation, Talent, and e-Skills Development. As a Union, we have prioritized e-skills development as a strategic imperative for the region's growth. In this regard, I am glad to say that ATU has developed an e-skills framework for Africa. Africa needs e-skills as a core set of skills to equip and prepare her citizens for 4IR and other emerging technologies. Lack of these skills will be a barrier to growth, employment, and social inclusion in Africa. The framework will guide the ATU Member States in developing and promulgating their country-specific e-skilling programmes. Additionally, it seeks to empower Africa to respond to and leverage its unique assets, such as its youthful population, to harness the power of emerging technologies.

The e-skilling model framework suggests policies and strategies that will enable nations to include e-skills in their school curriculum while considering persons with disabilities and special needs. It aims at assisting ATU membership and stakeholders in understanding and addressing the underlying trends, gaps, and

projections that may contribute to the development and implementation of overarching national e-skilling initiatives and therefore realize the digital economy. This strategy document outlines how African countries can plan and bridge the gap between the digital skills needed and the economic opportunities, both locally and globally. The framework demonstrates a number of strengths that countries may borrow from and shortcomings that countries need to address in order to attain the critical mass and quality digital skills necessary to sustain a vibrant local digital economy with productive tentacles in the region.

As a Union, ATU is confident that the e-skills framework will inspire its Member States to take the necessary measures and embrace massive e-skills development as a gateway to fulfilling the potential and the promise of Africa's vibrant digital future.

Additionally, ATU Member States can apply the critical components of the framework in their national strategies to align and harmonize their digital transformation initiatives with regional, continental, and global targets and objectives.

Ever since its establishment, the Union has worked closely with its members to implement its mandate. Your commitment in both time and resources greatly contributes to the achievement of the transformative impact of ICT in Africa's socio-economic development. For that, we are sincerely grateful to all our Member States and, in particular, Ministers responsible for ICTs, Regulators, Associate Members, and other key ICT international organizations that have continually supported us in these processes. Therefore, it is with great honour that we once again call on you to support us in the commemoration of ATU Day 2021.

As this year's key ATU Day 2021 event, the Union will conduct a ministerial round table forum on 7th December 2021 from 11:00 AM- 12:30 PM (EAT). The event will bring together ICT policy makers and regulators from the region with each of the sub-regions having a representative at the ministerial level to debate on the theme with a futuristic approach. Accordingly, the event will see countries showcase the steps they are undertaking to build the digital skills of their population and inspire the use of ICTs.

For the few weeks leading up to 7th December 2021, in commemoration of ATU Day 2021 based on the theme, we invite all our Member States to educate and inspire the populace to keep up with the times and interact with technology as both consumers and as solution providers. On the actual day of the commemoration, 7th December 2021, we call upon all our Member States to celebrate the day by organizing an activity based on this year's theme.

Let us all use this day to reflect on e-skills development in the context of the e-skills framework. Let us share experiences with the view of building a regional movement committed to developing e-skills in readiness for the 4IR under the theme, "e-skills Development for Africa's Digital Transformation".

The ATU General Secretariat wishes all the Member States, Associate Members and partners, a focused and memorable African Telecommunications and ICT Day 2021 as we together take Africa to the next level by equipping and preparing our people with the right digital skills for the uptake of emerging technologies for maximum socio-economic benefit of the continent.

Thank you!