



**Speech by the Secretary General During the ATU Africa Innovation Forum on 13th
February, 2023**

H.E. Mr Nape Moses NNAUYE, Hon Minister, Ministry for Information, & ICT of the Government of Tanzania,

Dr. Cosmas ZAVAZAVA, Director, ITU Telecommunications Development Bureau (BDT),

Mr. YANG Chen, Vice President, Huawei, Southern Africa;

Dr. Bienvenu AGBOKPONTO SOGLO, Director, Government Affairs Africa and IGA CTO Liaison (PE), Intel Corporation;

Distinguished panelists and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen

it is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this year's ATU Africa Innovation Forum, with the central theme of "Investing in the Future of Africa's Digital Innovation Talent". This theme is both timely and relevant, for it speaks to the very heart of what we hope to achieve as an organization, and what we aspire to for the future of our continent.

As we meet here today, let us take a moment to acknowledge the remarkable progress that has been made in the realm of digital technology in Africa. The exponential growth of mobile devices and internet access, the proliferation of digital services, and the rise of e-commerce platforms have changed the face of our continent and opened up new spaces of opportunity. Yet, despite these advancements, we must not be complacent, for there is still much work to be done.

One of the most pressing issues we face is the digital divide, a gap that runs deep through our communities and separates those with access to technology from those without. This divide is not just a matter of access, but it has far-reaching implications for economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability. To build a truly inclusive and equitable digital economy, we must take proactive steps to bridge this divide, and to ensure that access to technology is a right for all, not a privilege for the few.

To fully leverage the potential of Africa's digital economy, we must also advocate for policies that promote innovation and investment. This requires working together with international organizations such as the International Telecommunications Union, and private sector partners such as many of our Associate Members with whom we have worked with before on matters innovation. It requires advocating for policies that

protect intellectual property, promote digital inclusion, and create a level playing field for all players.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the ATU Africa Innovation Forum is a platform that enable us to come together, to share our thoughts and ideas, to learn from one another, and to collaborate on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I implore you to make the most of this opportunity, to network, to engage, and to form partnerships that will take our industry and our continent to new heights.

As mentioned to you at invitation to this forum, I am thrilled to announce that ATU, in partnership with the ITU and other key partners, will be launching the 2023 edition of the ATU Africa Innovation Challenge later this year in June, just after our Administrative Council meeting.

This year however, after the experience of the first two editions of the Challenge, and a full year of reflection last year; we thought to ourselves that we need to do something different and lasting. We've noted that a number of resourceful innovation initiatives have been taken without the benefit collaboration and partnerships. We acknowledge the levels of success that these initiatives have brought back, yet also, we think that much more can be gained by working together.

One of the major problems we face is the lack of a centralized platform that brings together all the information on innovation programs, competitions, and initiatives. This makes it difficult for individuals and organizations to discover and learn about these opportunities, leading to missed opportunities and a lack of participation.

Based on this understanding, we have undertaken to share with you our vision for a more innovative, dynamic, and competitive Africa. To this extent, I am pleased to invite you to the unveiling of the ATU Innovation Portal tomorrow: a platform that will serve as a hub of information on all innovation programs, competitions, and initiatives being carried out by the ATU member states, associate members, and partners.

This is just the first step in the introduction of the initiatives under the 2023 ATU Africa Innovation Programme and we hope that it will enable us to connect with visionaries, trailblazers, and game-changers in the ICT sector, giving these players the keys to invest in the future of Africa's digital innovation talent and be a part of shaping tomorrow.

The ATU Innovation Programme is your launchpad to success. It provides you with mentorship and training, opportunities to grow your ideas to their full potential, access to funding and resources, and the chance to network with industry leaders and experts. You will also be exposed to new technologies and innovative ideas, and have the chance to collaborate and partner with other innovators and organizations.

But that's not all, the ATU Africa Innovation Programme also provides market intelligence and insights to help bring your ideas to life. This is your chance to join a network of like-minded individuals, expand your horizons, and reach new heights.

Therefore, if you're full of ideas, driven by innovation, and ready to bring your vision to life, then it's time to join the ATU family. Be a part of something greater, be part of the ATU Africa Innovation Programme and Portal and explore the platform's power to connect, build, and expand.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is our moment.

I am honoured to extend an invitation to all of you to become involved in this groundbreaking initiative. Your support is greatly appreciated and essential to our success.

We welcome all of you; from corporations, governments, and individuals alike. Your support will play a crucial role in creating a supportive atmosphere for innovation and growth, as well as empowering the next generation of African digital entrepreneurs.

I implore you to take part in this endeavour, to help us invest in the future of Africa's digital innovation talent, and work together towards a more connected, innovative, and inclusive Africa.

Together, let us invest in the future of Africa's digital innovation talent, and let us work to create a more connected, innovative, and inclusive Africa.

Thank you.